

MASTER THESIS

PSYCHOLOGICAL VULNERABILITIES OF INTERVIEWEES DURING POLICE INTERVIEWS IN GERMANY

JUDITH STEINHAUER

24TH FEBRUARY 2025

UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.



Psychological Vulnerabilities of Interviewees During Police Interviews in Germany

Judith Steinhauer s2563142

(MSc) Psychology of conflict, risk, and safety, University of Twente

201400214 Master thesis

First supervisor: Dr. Lynn Weiher

Second supervisor: Dr. Max A. Friebs

24th February 2025

APA 7th Edition

Abstract

Police interviews are critical to justice but often occur in high-stress environments where especially psychological vulnerabilities, such as mental disorders or neurodivergent conditions, can hinder effective communication. This study aimed to examine the practices, perceptions, and challenges of German law enforcement officers when conducting interviews with psychologically vulnerable individuals. The initial research design employed a mixed-methods approach, comprising a structured questionnaire and planned semi-structured interviews. However, due to a lack of participant engagement, the study was based solely on questionnaire data collected from 28 police officers in Berlin, which was analysed using descriptive, exploratory, and qualitative methods.

Findings indicated that officers reported moderate confidence in adapting communication styles when engaging with vulnerable individuals but experienced significant challenges in identifying vulnerabilities and implementing appropriate follow-up actions. Notably, perceived competence varied across different vulnerable groups, with officers expressing the least confidence in working with individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and cognitive dysfunctions. Training on psychological vulnerability was reported to be largely absent, and most participants lacked access to assessment tools, although there was moderate interest in their development. Exploratory statistical analysis found that longer professional tenure correlated with reduced confidence in interrogation skills, while recent training positively impacted confidence levels. Qualitative analysis revealed themes of knowledge gaps, practical challenges, and the need for structured, scenario-based training to address these deficiencies. The study underscores the significant challenges faced by German law enforcement officers in interviewing psychologically vulnerable individuals and the pressing need for enhanced training, standardised tools, and tailored communication strategies.

Comparative insights from the UK and the Netherlands highlight the benefits of structured frameworks, suggesting Germany could benefit from similar national guidelines and scenario-based training programs.

ABSTRACT	2
PSYCHOLOGICAL VULNERABILITIES IN POLICE INTERVIEWS IN GERMANY	5
PSYCHOLOGICAL VULNERABILITIES IN POLICE INTERVIEWS	6
LEGAL AND PROCEDURAL FRAMEWORKS.....	9
OBSTACLES IN IDENTIFYING PSYCHOLOGICAL VULNERABILITIES AND THEIR IMPACT ON INTERVIEWS	11
RESEARCH GAP AND RELEVANCE OF THE TOPIC	14
RESEARCH AIM	16
METHODS	17
DESIGN	17
PARTICIPANTS.....	17
<i>Demographics</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Professional Background</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Experience in Interrogation.....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Familiarity with Psychological Vulnerabilities</i>	<i>19</i>
PROCEDURE AND MATERIALS	19
DATA ANALYSIS.....	21
RESULTS.....	23
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS	23
<i>Confidence in Interrogation Skills</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Competence Across Vulnerable Groups.....</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Perceptions of Training and Tools.....</i>	<i>25</i>
EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS.....	26
<i>ANOVA Analysis</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>Correlation Analysis</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>T-Test Analysis</i>	<i>28</i>
QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS	30
<i>Knowledge Gaps</i>	<i>30</i>
<i>Practical Challenges.....</i>	<i>31</i>
<i>Training Desirability.....</i>	<i>31</i>
DISCUSSION	33
COMPARISON WITH POLICE PRACTICES IN ENGLAND AND THE NETHERLANDS	37
LIMITATIONS AND STRENGTHS.....	41
CONCLUSION	43
REFERENCE LIST.....	45
APPENDIX	53

APPENDIX A	53
<i>Tables</i>	53
APPENDIX B	58
<i>Complete Questionnaire (German)</i>	58
<i>Complete Questionnaire (English)</i>	65
APPENDIX C	73
<i>Interview guide (German)</i>	73
<i>Interview guide (English)</i>	74
APPENDIX D	77
<i>Study enquiry</i>	77
APPENDIX E	79
<i>Declaration of confidentiality</i>	79
APPENDIX F	81
<i>Data protection agreement</i>	81
APPENDIX G	82
<i>R Code</i>	82

Psychological Vulnerabilities in Police Interviews in Germany

Police interviews serve as a fundamental tool for gathering accurate information, which is essential for a fair and effective administration of justice (Kassin et al., 2009). These interviews aim to establish the facts of a case, evaluate witness credibility, and obtain accurate statements or confessions from suspects to support criminal investigations. (Catlin et al., 2024). However, the reliability and, consequently, the outcome of criminal investigations of information obtained during these interviews depends heavily on the quality of communication between officers and interviewees (Davis & O'Donohue, 2004; Forrest et al., 2002). Effective communication in police interviews is particularly challenging due to the inherent power imbalance between law enforcement and the individual being questioned, as well as the heightened emotional states of both parties involved (Bélanger et al., 2023). Building upon the crucial role of communication in these interactions, it is crucial to recognise the high-stress nature of police interviews.

Police interviews are widely recognised as high-stress situations for the officers conducting them (Bélanger et al., 2023). Officers must simultaneously manage complex cognitive demands, including maintaining focus, adapting interview strategies, and processing real-time information, all while adhering to ethical and legal considerations and while regulating their own emotional responses to potentially traumatic or provocative situations (Holmberg, 2004). The pressure to obtain critical information, combined with anxiety, self-efficacy concerns and the fear of missing key details, contributes to high levels of stress for law enforcement officers (Roscoe et al., 2024). Additionally, officers dealing with uncooperative or distressed interviewees may experience emotional strain, and those working with victims of violent crimes risk secondary trauma, further compounding their psychological burden (Carrier, 2020; Duran et al., 2018). Research suggests that approximately 71% of officers report cognitive challenges during interviews, such as forgetting key questions, which underscores the immense mental load they experience (Roscoe et al., 2024).

However, investigative interviews are not only stressful for the police but often even more so for the interviewees. Unlike typical social interactions, police interviews place individuals in emotionally charged and intimidating circumstances, where they may struggle to navigate the unfamiliar and controlled environment (Kassin et al., 2009). Being questioned about a crime induces heightened anxiety and stress, which can impair memory recall, cognitive functioning, and decision-making (Davis & O'Donohue, 2004; Forrest et al., 2002; Gudjonsson, 2002). The interview setting, typically an isolated and unfamiliar space designed to encourage compliance, further increases psychological distress, reinforcing the imbalance of power between law enforcement and the individual being questioned (Bélanger et al., 2023).

Although many European countries have moved toward more ethical and scientifically supported approaches to interviewing, such as the PEACE model used in the UK, which encourages open-ended questioning and rapport-building to reduce stress and elicit reliable information. Some jurisdictions, such as the United States, still employ stress-inducing methods like the Reid technique, which deliberately aims to create desperation in interviewees (Levin, 2019). Interview techniques like those further exacerbate stress levels in interviewees. For instance, confrontational strategies, such as presenting suspects with evidence early on or alternating between sympathy and hostility, are designed to elicit responses but may also increase anxiety and lead to compliance under pressure (Bélanger et al., 2023). Understanding the psychological impact of police interviews is critical for evaluating the reliability of the statements provided by interviewees. Research has shown that such techniques can lead to false confessions and unreliable statements, particularly among vulnerable individuals who may struggle to assert themselves in high-pressure environments (Gudjonsson, 2002).

Psychological Vulnerabilities in Police Interviews

Psychological vulnerabilities in police interviews refer to cognitive and emotional conditions that can significantly affect an individual's ability to navigate the complex and stressful environment of the interview (Herrington & Roberts, 2012). Gudjonsson (2010)

provides a framework for categorising psychological vulnerabilities in forensic settings. He identifies four key types of psychological vulnerabilities: Mental disorders, such as depression, anxiety, and psychosis. Mental disabilities, including cognitive impairments and limited adaptive behaviour. Personality traits, such as impressionability and compliance, which may increase susceptibility to coercion. Abnormal mental states, such as extreme stress, withdrawal symptoms, or sleep deprivation, which can temporarily impair cognitive functioning. Recent research has expanded on Gudjonsson's framework, highlighting the significance of neurodiversity in forensic contexts. Studies indicate that neurodivergent individuals, including those with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (AD(H)D), and dyslexia, may experience unique communication challenges during police interviews, requiring tailored investigative approaches (Bagnall et al., 2023; Maras, 2022; Siberry, 2021). The National Autistic Society emphasises that traditional interrogation techniques may be ineffective for autistic individuals, leading to increased stress and misinterpretation of responses by law enforcement.

This study focuses therefore on mental disorders, mental disabilities, neurodiversity, and abnormal mental states as these categories were the most frequently encountered during my internship experience (Steinhauer, 2024). Although personality traits can influence police interviews, they are not the primary focus of this study, as they represent enduring patterns of behaviour rather than temporary cognitive or emotional impairments that directly affect an individual's ability to engage in the interrogation process (Geijsen et al., 2018; Otgaar et al., 2021). Traits such as compliance, suggestibility, or impressionability can make an individual more susceptible to coercive questioning, but they do not constitute a psychological vulnerability in the same way that mental disorders, neurodivergent conditions, or extreme stress states do. While personality traits may shape an individual's behavioural tendencies, they do not inherently impair cognitive functioning or create specific barriers to effective communication in police interviews. This study, therefore, focuses on psychological vulnerabilities that pose situational impairments, directly affecting a person's ability to provide accurate and voluntary statements during an interrogation.

The presence of psychological vulnerabilities encompasses a wide range of conditions that, while not necessarily leading to unreliable statements, can significantly affect an individual's ability to participate effectively in police interviews (Steinhauer, 2024). These vulnerabilities impact an individual's capacity to understand questions, recall events accurately, and communicate effectively, often in ways that extend beyond the general cognitive strain or stress experienced by any interviewee (Bélanger et al., 2023).

Research indicates that neurodivergent conditions such as ADHD and ASD introduce specific and inherent cognitive and communicative challenges that make police interviews particularly difficult (Pearse, 1995; Gudjonsson, 2010). ADHD affects executive functioning, meaning individuals may struggle with sustained attention, impulse control, and working memory, all of which are critical for following complex questioning and formulating coherent responses (Bagnall et al., 2023; Young et al., 2020). Unlike general stress-induced distraction, individuals with ADHD may find it especially difficult to filter out irrelevant information, regulate their responses, or maintain a structured narrative under pressure, regardless of the emotional intensity of the situation (Cunial et al., 2020; Lesch, 2019).

Similarly, individuals with ASD may experience fundamental difficulties with social cognition and sensory processing, which can further complicate police interviews (Bagnall et al., 2023). Deficits in understanding non-verbal cues, indirect language, or implied meanings may lead to misinterpretations or responses that appear inappropriate or uncooperative to an interviewer (Freckelton, 2019; Maras & Bowler, 2012). Crane et al. (2016) emphasise that standard police interviewing techniques are often ineffective for individuals with ASD. While open-ended questions are typically recommended to prevent leading the interviewee, they can pose challenges for individuals with ASD, who may struggle with free recall and understanding the scope of information required. Additionally, sensory overload in unfamiliar or high-stimulus environments, such as bright lights, sudden noises, or an officer's tone of voice, can lead to shutdowns, increased anxiety, or atypical affective responses, making it harder for individuals to process and answer questions effectively (Murphy, 2018). These

challenges persist even in low-stress situations, meaning that stress alone is not the cause of vulnerability, but it amplifies pre-existing cognitive and sensory difficulties (Maras, 2022).

Moreover, mental health conditions frequently co-occur with ADHD and ASD (Serine, 2014) , further compounding the challenges faced by neurodivergent individuals in police interviews. Comorbid depression and anxiety disorders can exacerbate working memory deficits, emotional regulation difficulties, and cognitive distortions, making it even more difficult for individuals to recall events accurately or articulate responses in a logical manner (Gudjonsson, 2010; Young et al., 2020). Additionally, individuals with anxiety disorders may experience heightened physiological arousal, leading to fight-or-flight responses, which could be misinterpreted as evasiveness or guilt. Reality testing deficits, the ability to distinguish between what is real and what is imagined, may also occur in cases of severe anxiety or depression, increasing the risk of distorted perceptions or misinterpretations of events (Gudjonsson, 2010).

Gudjonsson's framework underscores the importance of recognising that these vulnerabilities, while not inherently making an individual unreliable, can profoundly influence their capacity to navigate the high-pressure environment of a police interview (Gudjonsson, 2010). Understanding the impact of psychological vulnerabilities is crucial not only for ensuring fair treatment within the criminal justice system but also for enhancing the accuracy of information gathered during interviews. If interview methods are not adapted to accommodate these vulnerabilities, critical details may be overlooked or misunderstood, potentially leading to miscarriages of justice. Given these challenges, legal frameworks have been established to provide necessary protections and ensure ethical and lawful interview practices.

Legal and Procedural Frameworks

The European Union's 2013 Directive on the Right of Access to a Lawyer, along with related legislative measures, seeks to establish a framework for safeguarding the rights of vulnerable individuals during police interviews (Fair Trials, 2021; Explanatory Memorandum to COM(2019)560 - Implementation of Directive 2013/48/EU on the Right of Access to a

Lawyer and to Communicate With Third Persons and With Consular Authorities While Deprived of Liberty - EU Monitor, n.d.). These regulations recognise the necessity for special protections and accommodations to ensure that suspects and witnesses are treated fairly and in compliance with human rights standards (Fair Trials, 2021; Cras, 2014). Key provisions within the directive guarantee the right to timely legal assistance, ensuring that individuals understand their rights and the legal consequences of their statements. The regulations mandate the presence of a lawyer for suspects or accused persons, including during questioning by the police or other law enforcement authorities (Dumontier, 2022). The directive also emphasises the importance of preventing coercion, reinforcing that interviews must be conducted in a manner that respects the dignity and mental well-being of the interviewee (Cras, 2014). Additionally, the rules stipulate that authorities must provide clear and accessible information regarding legal rights and available support, such as legal aid (Right to Access a Lawyer in Criminal and European Warrant Arrest Proceedings | EUR-Lex, n.d.).

Despite these significant advancements, one of the primary shortcomings of these regulations is the lack of specificity regarding their implementation. While the EU directives set essential legal protections, they do not provide detailed or uniform guidance on how police officers should assess vulnerability (Cape & Hodgson, 2014). This lack of clear implementation standards leads to inconsistencies across European Union member states, with significant variation in how law enforcement agencies apply these protections in practice (Right to Access a Lawyer in Criminal and European Warrant Arrest Proceedings | EUR-Lex, n.d.; Cape & Hodgson, 2014).

Germany, like other EU countries, is legally bound by these regulations, yet research suggests that national and local enforcement varies widely. While the legal framework provides a strong foundation, its effectiveness depends on practical implementation, which remains inconsistent. Enhancing procedural guidelines, introducing mandatory officer training programs, and developing standardised assessment frameworks are essential steps in

addressing these gaps and promoting fair and equitable treatment of vulnerable individuals in police interviews (Cape & Hodgson, 2014).

However, while these regulations represent a major step towards safeguarding the rights of vulnerable suspects and witnesses, they fall short in providing detailed procedural guidance for law enforcement agencies. This gap between policy and practice is well-documented in the literature, with several studies highlighting the challenges in translating legal mandates into effective procedures at the local level (Herrington & Roberts, 2012; Farrugia, 2021). The lack of detailed instruction on how to identify and support individuals with psychological vulnerabilities during police interviews leads to inconsistent application across different jurisdictions. This inconsistency is particularly problematic given the complex nature of psychological vulnerabilities and the potential for misinterpretation of behaviours during police interviews (Gudjonsson, 2010; Bélanger et al., 2023). For instance, individuals with neurodevelopmental conditions such as autism or ADHD may exhibit behaviours that could be mistaken for evasiveness or dishonesty rather than signs of distress or cognitive difficulty. The absence of standardised protocols for implementing these legal protections underscores the need for comprehensive training and clearer operational guidelines for law enforcement officers, ensuring that the intentions behind these legal frameworks are effectively realised in practice.

Obstacles in Identifying Psychological Vulnerabilities and Their Impact on Interviews

Identifying psychological vulnerabilities in police interviews presents significant challenges due to various factors, including societal stigma, undiagnosed conditions, miscommunication and misinterpreting behaviours. The stigma surrounding mental health conditions and neurodevelopmental disorders may discourage individuals from disclosing their diagnoses, even in legal settings where such information is crucial for ensuring fair treatment and accurate assessments (Freckelton, 2019). However, disclosing this information is not always feasible. Many individuals may be unaware of their condition, feel reluctant to share such personal information, or fear that it may be used to their disadvantage. Relying solely on self-disclosure is problematic, as individuals may lack the

awareness, confidence, or legal knowledge to articulate their needs in such situations.

Instead, it is the responsibility of law enforcement officers to proactively assess potential vulnerabilities through careful observation, structured questioning, and appropriate screening tools. These challenges highlight the necessity for comprehensive police training on recognising and accommodating psychological vulnerabilities. Officers must be equipped with the knowledge and skills to identify individuals who may require additional support, ensuring that assessments do not depend solely on explicit self-reporting but incorporate structured, non-intrusive methods to safeguard the accuracy and fairness of the investigative process.

Late or undiagnosed conditions, particularly among adults who have developed coping mechanisms to mask their symptoms, further complicates recognition. Masking refers to the conscious or unconscious suppression of behaviours associated with a condition in order to appear more 'neurotypical' in social settings (Hull et al., 2017). While this can be an adaptive strategy in everyday life, it requires significant cognitive effort and can lead to exhaustion. This is especially prevalent among women and professionals, who may not receive a diagnosis until later in life due to differences in symptom presentation compared to the commonly studied male-dominant models of conditions such as ADHD and autism (Stenner et al., 2019; Targum & Adler, 2015; Young et al., 2020). As a result, individuals who have spent years masking their symptoms may be less likely to disclose their condition, making it more difficult for officers to recognise and appropriately accommodate their needs.

Furthermore, the presence of psychological vulnerabilities complicates police interviews by introducing significant communication challenges. Individuals with such vulnerabilities often struggle with processing complex questions, accurately recalling events, and expressing themselves clearly under pressure (Kassin et al., 2009; Gudjonsson, 2002). These difficulties can lead to miscommunication, fragmented statements, or inconsistencies that officers may misinterpret as deception. In high-stress situations, vulnerable individuals may become overwhelmed, which can increase their susceptibility to suggestive questioning or compliance with leading statements. One of the most significant risks associated with

psychological vulnerabilities in police interviews is the potential for misinterpreting miscommunication and behaviour. For example, individuals with ADHD may struggle to maintain focus, regulate impulsivity, or provide coherent responses, which officers unfamiliar with the condition might misconstrue as evasiveness or dishonesty (Freckelton, 2019; Gentile et al., 2006). Similarly, an autistic individual who displays limited facial expressions or avoids direct eye contact might be perceived as uncooperative rather than experiencing sensory overload. These misinterpretations increase the risk of unfair treatment and flawed investigative conclusions. These factors collectively compromise the accuracy and fairness of the investigative process, increasing the likelihood of false confessions or incomplete disclosures (Pearse, 1995).

Psychological vulnerabilities substantially increase the likelihood of inaccurate statements or false confessions. Gudjonsson et al. (2008) conducted a study among prisoners in Iceland, revealing a strong correlation between ADHD symptoms and compliance during police questioning. More alarmingly, participants who reported ADHD symptoms in adulthood were significantly more likely to claim that they had made a false confession to the police at some point in their lives. This finding is particularly concerning given the substantial weight that confessions carry in legal proceedings, often leading to convictions even in cases where physical evidence does not support the statement. The heightened stress of the interview environment, combined with cognitive difficulties, can impair an individual's ability to process information critically, defend themselves against coercive techniques, or resist suggestive questioning (Gudjonsson, 2015).

These challenges highlight the need for specialised screening tools designed to help officers identify psychological vulnerabilities during police interactions. Unlike full clinical diagnoses, which require extensive assessment by trained professionals, these tools could focus on recognising key indicators, such as difficulties with communication, cognitive processing, or emotional regulation, that may affect an individual's ability to participate effectively in an interview. To address these, law enforcement officers must be equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to identify and accommodate these vulnerabilities,

adapting their interview techniques to meet the specific needs of each individual. Therefore, these findings emphasise the urgent need for enhanced officer training, standardised screening tools, and adapted interview techniques to ensure that vulnerable individuals are accurately identified and appropriately supported during police interviews. Without such measures, the legal system risks unintended discrimination against those with psychological vulnerabilities, undermining both investigative integrity and the protection of individual rights.

Research Gap and Relevance of the topic

Building upon the challenges posed by the European Union's 2013 Rules, the literature reveals significant gaps in research regarding clear guidelines and standardised procedures for interviewing individuals with psychological vulnerabilities (Steinhauer, 2024). This literature review examined the existing research on the intersection of police interviews and psychological vulnerabilities particularly concerning AD(H)D, revealing critical research gaps in the area of psychological vulnerabilities in police interviews. One of the most prominent findings is the insufficient training and screening tools available to police officers for identifying and accommodating individuals with psychological vulnerabilities. Herrington and Roberts (2012) highlight the lack of comprehensive education for law enforcement personnel in recognising and addressing these vulnerabilities during interviews. This gap in training is further emphasised by Young et al. (2013), who note the limited awareness among police officers about the specific challenges posed by conditions. Additionally, there is a scarcity of evidence-based, practical strategies for accommodating vulnerable individuals during police interviews. Farrugia (2021) points out the complexity of assessing vulnerability in real-time interview situations and the need for more robust decision-making frameworks. Gudjonsson et al. (2008) and Gudjonsson (2015) underscore the increased risk of false confessions among individuals with AD(H)D symptoms, yet there is limited research on effective interventions to mitigate these risks. The lack of standardised, validated screening tools in police settings is a major issue because officers currently have no structured way to assess vulnerability in real time. Unlike medical professionals, officers are not trained to

diagnose psychological conditions, so they require practical tools that allow them to make informed decisions about interview adaptations without overstepping into clinical territory. Thus, developing screening tools specifically for police settings would bridge the gap between clinical knowledge and practical policing, ensuring that vulnerable individuals receive appropriate accommodations without requiring a formal diagnosis at the time of the interview. These gaps in the literature highlight the pressing need for more comprehensive research to inform best practices in managing psychological vulnerabilities during police interviews.

Building upon the identified gaps in training and practical strategies, there is a compelling rationale for further research in this area. The increasing prevalence of neurodiverse diagnoses, coupled with growing awareness of psychological vulnerabilities, necessitates a comprehensive update of interrogation protocols. As Song et al. (2021) report, the prevalence of symptomatic adult AD(H)D worldwide is estimated at 6.76%, affecting approximately 366.33 million adults. Additionally, research indicates a significant overlap between AD(H)D and autism spectrum disorder (ASD), with many individuals experiencing co-occurring symptoms that impact cognitive functioning, communication, and social interactions (Canals et al., 2024; Hours et al., 2022). Dyslexia, a common learning disability, further complicates police interviews as individuals with this condition may struggle with processing verbal information and responding effectively under pressure (British Dyslexia Association, 2021; Melanie Jameson et al., 2013).

Moreover, while there is a growing body of international research on this topic, there is a notable scarcity of German-specific studies examining the intersection of psychological vulnerabilities and police interviews. This gap is particularly concerning given the unique legal and procedural frameworks within the German criminal justice system, which differ significantly from those in other jurisdictions. Unlike common law systems, which are more adversarial in nature, the German legal system follows an inquisitorial model, wherein judges and prosecutors play a more active role in gathering evidence and determining the course of proceedings (Fair Trials International, 2013). This procedural structure places a greater

emphasis on the accuracy and reliability of information obtained during police interviews, making it critical to ensure that interrogation techniques do not disadvantage vulnerable individuals. Failure to properly accommodate psychological vulnerabilities could result in unreliable evidence, which, under the German principle of objective investigation (Amtsermittlungsgrundsatz), could lead to misjudgements that impact the fairness of proceedings and the accused's legal rights (*Verfahrensgrundsätze | NRW-Justiz*, n.d.). Additionally, the German Code of Criminal Procedure (Strafprozessordnung, StPO) contains specific provisions aimed at protecting vulnerable individuals, such as the requirement for legal representation and the use of appropriate adults in some cases (*German Code of Criminal Procedure (Strafprozeßordnung – StPO)*, n.d.). However, these safeguards are often inconsistently applied in practice, as frontline officers may lack sufficient training and guidance to recognise psychological vulnerabilities effectively.

As Herrington and Roberts (2012) emphasise, the implementation of guidelines for interviewing vulnerable individuals often varies across jurisdictions, highlighting the need for country-specific research. The limited German-specific research on this topic necessitates further exploration to ensure that police practices in Germany are aligned with the latest understanding of psychological vulnerabilities and their impact on interview outcomes. This study aims to address these gaps by providing much-needed insights into the German context, ultimately contributing to the development of more effective and fair interview practices for individuals with psychological vulnerabilities.

Research Aim

By examining the current practices, perceptions, and needs among German law enforcement officers, the research seeks to identify existing measures and strategies while highlighting areas that require additional support. Responding to the call for more comprehensive, country-specific research (Farrugia, 2021), this study focuses on bridging the gap between international best practices and their practical implementation in Germany (Gudjonsson et al., 2008; Gudjonsson, 2015). The research is particularly timely given the

increasing prevalence of neurodiverse diagnoses (Song et al., 2021) and the growing recognition of how psychological vulnerabilities impact police interview outcomes.

By addressing the research question, **"What are the current practices, perceptions, and needs among German law enforcement officers regarding the interrogation of individuals with psychological vulnerabilities?"**, this study aims to provide an in-depth understanding of the challenges faced by officers and the effectiveness of existing practices. The goal is to identify practical and evidence-based recommendations that can improve interview accuracy and fairness while ensuring appropriate support for both officers and vulnerable individuals.

A key focus of this study is to provide insights that support the refinement of interview protocols and training programmes within German law enforcement. By identifying existing gaps and aligning recommendations with international standards, the research offers guidance on areas that require further development. While challenges remain, this study contributes to bridging the divide between academic research and practical application, equipping law enforcement agencies with a foundation for improving interview practices with vulnerable individuals.

Methods

Design

This study employed a mixed-methods design, including both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative component consisted of a questionnaire distributed to police officers in Berlin, while the qualitative component involved open questions in the questionnaire distributed. There was also an option for a follow-up semi-structured interview. Unfortunately, none of the participants chose to take part in the interviews. Therefore, this study focuses solely on analysing the questionnaire data to examine participants' experiences and perceptions. The study aimed to explore the measures, strategies, and support systems currently in place for managing psychological vulnerabilities during police interviews.

Participants

Demographics

The participants were 37 police officers from Berlin. However, two individuals declined to provide informed consent, leaving 35 participants who began the survey. Of these, 28 completed at least part of the questionnaire, while 21 participants completed the survey in its entirety. The study was initially submitted to the official studies and research inquiries division of the police, which subsequently disseminated it to various internal departments for participation. Among those contacted, the Berlin State Office of Criminal Investigations (Landeskriminalamt, LKA) and Directorate 4 agreed to participate. As a result, the officers included in the study were drawn from these two divisions. The participants consisted of 50% males ($n = 14$) and 50% females ($n = 14$). Regarding age distribution, the majority was between 25 and 54 years, 7% were under 25 ($n = 2$), 32% were aged 25–34 ($n = 9$), 18% were aged 35–44 ($n = 5$), 25% were aged 45–54 ($n = 7$), and 18% were 55 or older ($n = 5$) (see Table 1, Appendix A). No participants opted to take part in the follow-up interview.

Professional Background

Participants held a variety of positions within the police force, including roles such as clerks (Sachbearbeiter/in), criminal investigators (Kriminalkommissar), leadership positions (Führungskraft gD). Their career start dates spanned multiple periods, with 43% ($n = 12$) beginning between 1983 and 1999, 21% ($n = 6$) between 2000 and 2010, and 36% ($n = 10$) between 2015 and 2021. In terms of tenure in their current roles, the largest group (43%, $n = 12$) had worked for 1–5 years, followed by those in their roles for more than 16 years (21%, $n = 6$). Smaller proportions reported less than a year (18%, $n = 5$), 6–10 years (14%, $n = 4$), or 11–15 years (4%, $n = 1$) in their current positions (Table 1, Appendix A)

Experience in Interrogation

The participants reported varying levels of experience in conducting interrogations. A significant proportion (36%, $n = 10$) had been conducting interrogations for over 16 years, while an equal percentage (36%, $n = 10$) had 1–5 years of experience. Smaller groups reported less than a year (11%, $n = 3$), 6–10 years (7%, $n = 2$), or 11–15 years (11%, $n = 3$) of experience. Regarding weekly interrogation frequency, 38% ($n = 11$) reported conducting

one interview per week, 36% (n = 10) reported conducting 3–7 interviews, 18% (n = 5) reported conducting two interviews, and 4% (n = 1) reported conducting no interviews, while another 4% (n = 1) reported conducting ten interviews (see Table 1, Appendix A).

Familiarity with Psychological Vulnerabilities

Familiarity with psychological vulnerabilities such as ADHD or ASD was relatively low (Table 1, Appendix A). Only 25% (n = 7) of participants were familiar with the concept, while 54% (n = 15) stated they were unfamiliar, and 21% (n = 6) answered I don't know / no answer. In their personal circles, 46% (n = 13) knew someone with a psychological vulnerability, while 50% (n = 14) did not, and 4% (n = 1) were unsure. Professionally, 14% (n = 4) had worked with individuals with psychological vulnerabilities outside their police duties, whereas 86% (n = 24) had no such experience.

Procedure and Materials

A formal request was submitted to the Berlin police, including a Study enquiry, a Declaration of confidentiality, a Data protection agreement, the questionnaire, and the interview guide (see Appendix). Approval was granted by the State Criminal Police Office and Directorate 4. The questionnaire was distributed electronically via a Qualtrics link, and participants were informed about the study's aims, procedures, and confidentiality measures.

The study utilised a structured questionnaire written in German, designed to gather information about police officers' experiences, perceptions, and practices regarding psychological vulnerabilities. The survey consisted of four sections, each designed to explore different aspects of the participants' experiences and perceptions, including Demographics, Knowledge and Skills Section, Perceptions of Existing Tools and Training, and finally Open-Ended Questions. The Demographics Section aimed to capture background information about the participants and, their experience, and the frequency of conducting Interviews. The questionnaire design was inspired by similar self-report tools used in evaluating investigative training by the Dutch Police Academy, which assesses motivation, learning outcomes, and behavioural application in real-world settings (Wessels, 2024).

Following this, the participants were provided with a brief explanation of psychological vulnerability. This ensured a shared understanding of the concept before proceeding. The Knowledge and Skills Section then focused on participants' self-assessed confidence in identifying and managing individuals with psychological vulnerabilities. Officers were asked to rate their abilities to recognise signs of vulnerability, adapt their interview techniques accordingly, and implement appropriate follow-up measures. The section also included items assessing their ability to tailor communication strategies to the specific needs of vulnerable individuals, such as adjusting the wording, pacing, and tone of questioning. Questions included statements like, *"I am confident in assessing my knowledge accurately to prepare for interviewing a vulnerable person"* and *"I am confident in adapting my wording to the age, vulnerability, and developmental level of the person during the interview"*.

The Perceptions of Existing Tools and Training Section explored officers' familiarity with and opinions on current resources available for managing psychological vulnerabilities. Participants were asked whether they had encountered assessment tools or training programs related to this topic and to evaluate their usefulness, with questions such as, *"Was the topic of psychological vulnerability addressed during your police training?"*, and whether they found such tools or training useful. Another question asked, *"Do you have access to an assessment tool to identify psychological vulnerability"*).

Finally, the Open-Ended Questions Section provided participants with the opportunity to elaborate on their experiences and suggest improvements. Participants were asked, *"Is there any other information you would like to share?"*. The complete questionnaire can be found in Appendix A.

An expert interview was conducted as part of the study to gather additional qualitative insights. The aim of these interviews was to explore the topic of psychological vulnerability during interrogations in more depth, focusing on the challenges and methods of dealing with vulnerable individuals. A semi-structured approach was designed, allowing for flexibility to delve into specific areas based on the participant's responses.

The interview guide (see Appendix C) outlined potential questions, including topics such as recognising vulnerability, adapting behaviour during interviews, and evaluating existing tools and training. For example, participants would have been asked, “What types of vulnerability do you observe during interviews?” and “How does your behaviour change during the interview when you identify vulnerability?”. Additional questions focused on the completeness and effectiveness of vulnerability questionnaires, preferred methods of detection, and desired improvements in training.

However, none of the participants chose to take part in these interviews. Furthermore, additional efforts to contact researchers and experts in the field also yielded no responses. As a result, the study focused exclusively on the questionnaire data to analyse the participants’ experiences and perceptions. While the absence of interview data limited the qualitative depth of the findings, the structured questionnaire provided valuable insights into the challenges faced by officers in recognising and managing psychological vulnerabilities.

Data Analysis

Quantitative and qualitative data from the questionnaires were analysed using a combination of statistical and qualitative approaches to gain a comprehensive understanding of the participants’ experiences and perceptions.

Quantitative Analysis

The quantitative analysis was conducted using R version 4.3.2. Descriptive statistics were calculated for each item. Responses were measured on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated “strongly agree” or “very useful” and 5 indicated “strongly disagree” or “not useful at all.”. The value six represented “I don’t know / no answer,” which was included to allow participants to indicate when they were uncertain, lacked experience, or felt unable to provide an informed response to a particular item. This prevented forced responses that could introduce random or inaccurate answers, ensuring the validity of the data. For the purpose of analysis, “I don’t know / no answer” was recoded as three (neutral). This approach was chosen because neutrality represents neither agreement nor disagreement,

making it a balanced way to account for uncertainty without skewing results. The descriptive statistics provided an overview of participants' responses.

Since data on participants' experience levels were collected, exploratory analyses were conducted to examine how different background factors might influence officers' perspectives and performance in interviewing vulnerable individuals. To explore these relationships, correlation tests and t-tests were used to compare groups and identify potential differences. The analyses focused on factors such as years of experience, training background, and familiarity with psychological vulnerabilities to assess their impact on officers' confidence in conducting interviews, perceived competence with different vulnerable groups, and interest in further training or tools.

To investigate potential variations in responses between groups, t-tests were conducted on the categorical independent variables of gender (female, male) and familiarity with psychological vulnerability (yes, no). These analyses assessed whether these factors impacted the three dependent variables. Including gender as a variable in the analysis allows for the examination of potential differences in perceptions, confidence, and needs between male and female officers when interrogating psychologically vulnerable individuals. Research has indicated that female officers often exhibit higher levels of empathy compared to their male counterparts, which can influence their approach to interviews. For instance, a study found that female police officers working with sexual offenders displayed more empathic behaviour than male officers (Oxburgh & Ost, 2011). Additionally, gender differences have been observed in the use of interview tactics, with male officers more frequently employing accusatory techniques (Golub & Pavliček, 2013). By analysing gender, the study aims to identify whether such differences exist in the context of interviewing psychologically vulnerable individuals, thereby informing tailored training and support programs.

The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) was used to determine the strength and direction of the relationships between continuous IVs and dependent variables. The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) was used for these tests. Additionally, t-tests were conducted to compare mean differences across categorical IVs (gender, familiarity with vulnerability). The

t-tests used Welch's method to account for unequal variances, with statistical significance set at $p < 0.05$.

Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative data analysis was conducted manually, orientating on Braun and Clarke's (2006) reflexive approach to thematic analysis. The qualitative analysis process followed the six stages outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). First, the data were familiarised by reviewing the responses to the open-ended questions, noting initial impressions. Next, key features relevant to the research question were identified, and initial codes were generated manually, capturing meaningful segments of text. The initial codes were then examined to identify patterns or themes across the data, with related codes grouped under broader themes. These themes were reviewed, refined, and adjusted for relevance and frequency. Clear definitions were created for the final themes, ensuring consistency in their interpretation. Finally, a report was produced summarising the key themes, supported by direct quotations from participants.

Since no interviews were conducted, the analysis was based on responses to the four open-ended questions about training and tools for recognising psychological vulnerability. Officers were asked whether psychological vulnerability (e.g., ADHD, ASD, dyslexia) was covered in their police training, and if not, whether they would have liked it. Officers were questioned about the availability and perceived usefulness of tools for recognising psychological vulnerability, and whether they would like such tools. Participants were asked whether they received training for dealing with individuals in need of psychological protection, and if so, what it entailed. Officers were asked whether they had access to training methods for working with psychologically vulnerable individuals and to describe them if applicable. Due to the four questions asked, four primary themes emerged from the data. Within each theme, distinct code groups were identified to reflect key patterns in the responses.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Confidence in Interrogation Skills

The self-reported confidence of German law enforcement officers in interviewing psychologically vulnerable individuals varied across skill areas. Table 2 indicates moderate confidence in preparing interviews appropriately ($M = 3.30$, $SD = 0.97$) and recognising signs of vulnerability ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 0.90$). However, officers expressed higher confidence in adapting their interrogation methods to accommodate the specific needs of vulnerable individuals. For example, significant confidence was noted in adapting the pace of interrogation ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 0.56$) and tailoring language to suit the developmental stage of the interviewee ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 0.58$).

Despite these strengths, participants exhibited lower confidence in translating their understanding of psychological vulnerabilities into effective follow-up actions ($M = 3.30$, $SD = 1.02$) and reliably identifying vulnerable individuals ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 0.98$).

Table 2

Confidence in Interrogation Skills (N = 23)

I am confident...	M	SD
... to prepare interviews with vulnerable individuals appropriately	3.30	0.97
... in recognising signs indicating a vulnerable individual	3.57	0.90
... to adapt communication pace during interviews	4.04	0.56
... to adjust word choice to developmental stage of interviewee	4.17	0.58
... to translate signs of vulnerability into follow-up actions	3.30	1.02
... in reliably identifying vulnerable persons	3.04	0.98

Note: Likert scale from 1(I strongly disagree) to 5 (I strongly agree); complete table in Appendix A).

Competence Across Vulnerable Groups

Perceived competence when working with specific vulnerable groups varied significantly. As shown in Table 3, officers felt most skilled in working with minors ($M = 4.45$, $SD = 0.86$), with over 60% of participants rating themselves as skilled or somewhat skilled. Conversely, officers reported the least confidence when working with individuals with autism spectrum disorders ($M = 2.50$, $SD = 1.01$) and cognitive dysfunctions ($M = 2.55$, $SD = 0.91$).

Table 3*Competence Across Vulnerable Groups (N = 22)*

Question	M	SD
Person with a mental disability	2.86	1.17
Person with a mental disorder	3.05	1.00
Person with a cognitive dysfunction	2.55	0.91
Person with an autism spectrum disorder	2.50	1.01
Person with AD(H)S	3.41	0.80
Minor	4.45	0.86

*Note: Likert scale from 1 (Unskilled) to 5 (Skilled)**Perceptions of Training and Tools*

The results show that the majority of participants reported that the topic of psychological vulnerability was not covered during their police training ($M = 1.68$, $SD = 1.09$). Additionally, most participants indicated that they do not have an assessment tool or questionnaire for recognising psychological vulnerability ($M = 1.36$, $SD = 0.66$). Regarding the desire for such tools, participants expressed moderate interest in having a psychological vulnerability assessment tool or questionnaire available ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 1.20$). When asked about the perceived usefulness of such tools, the average rating was higher ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 1.01$). In terms of training and educational methods, participants reported moderate availability of training for dealing with individuals in need of psychological protection ($M = 2.41$, $SD = 1.22$) and further education methods to prepare for working with psychologically vulnerable individuals ($M = 2.90$, $SD = 1.18$).

Table 4*Interest in Training and Tools (N = 22)*

Question	M	SD
During your police training, was the topic of 'psychological vulnerability' (e.g. ADHD, ASD, dyslexia) covered?	1.68	1.09

Do you have an assessment tool / questionnaire for recognising (psychological) vulnerability?	1.36	0.66
How useful do you consider such an assessment tool / questionnaire to be?	3.59	1.01
Would you like to have such an assessment tool / questionnaire?	3.27	1.20
Is there any training to prepare you for people who are in need of (psychological) protection?	2.41	1.22
Are there any further education methods to prepare you for people who are (psychologically) vulnerable?	2.90	1.18

Note: Likert scale from 1(No / Not useful at all) to 5 (Yes / Very useful)

Exploratory Analysis

ANOVA Analysis

A series of one-way ANOVA tests were conducted to examine potential differences in Confidence in Interrogation Skills, Competence Across Vulnerable Groups, and Interest in Training and Tools based on categorical independent variables (Age, Year of Training, and Years in Position).

The results revealed that Years in Position had a statistically significant effect on Confidence in Interrogation Skills ($F(4, n) = 3.91, p = .019$), suggesting that officers' confidence levels differ depending on their length of service in their current role. To better understand which groups significantly differed, a Tukey's HSD post-hoc test was conducted. The post-hoc analysis showed that officers with 11–15 years in their position reported significantly higher confidence than those with less than 1 year ($p = .042$), 1–5 years ($p = .048$), and 6–10 years ($p = .047$). This indicates that confidence steadily increases with experience but reaches a plateau after approximately 15 years, as no significant differences were observed between officers with 16+ years of experience and any other group. Conversely, no significant effects were found for Age or Year of Training on any of the dependent variables, indicating that these factors do not substantially impact officers'

reported confidence, competence, or interest in training. A complete summary of ANOVA test results is available in Table 5.

Table 5

ANOVA

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	f	p
Age	Confidence in Interrogation Skills	0.79	.545
	Competence Across Vulnerable Groups	1.43	.267
	Interest in Training and Tools	1.44	.26
	Existing Training and Tools	0.52	.721
Year Training	Confidence in Interrogation Skills	0.79	.670
	Competence Across Vulnerable Groups	0.42	.918
	Interest in Training and Tools	2.26	.160
	Existing Training and Tools	1.23	.423
Years Position	Confidence in Interrogation Skills	3.91	.019*
	Competence Across Vulnerable Groups	0.83	.522
	Interest in Training and Tools	0.74	.577
	Existing Training and Tools	1.06	.406

*Note: *Statistically significant results ($p < 0.05$).*

Correlation Analysis

To further examine potential differences a series of Pearson correlation tests were conducted between Years in Interrogation, Weekly Interviews, and the three dependent variables: Confidence in Interrogation Skills, Competence Across Vulnerable Groups, and Interest in Training and Tools. The results revealed that Years in Interrogation had a significant positive correlation with Confidence in Interrogation Skills ($r = 0.41$, $p = .050$), indicating that officers with more experience in interrogations tend to report higher confidence in their skills. No other significant correlations were found for Years in Interrogation in relation to Competence Across Vulnerable Groups or Interest in Training and Tools.

Additionally, Weekly Interviews showed no significant correlations with any of the dependent variables, suggesting that the frequency of conducting interrogations per week does not strongly influence officers' confidence, competence, or interest in further training.

A complete table with all correlation values can be found in Table 6.

Table 6

Correlation Analysis Results

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	r	p
Years Interrogation	Confidence in Interrogation Skills	0.41	.050*
	Competence Across Vulnerable Groups	0.32	.154
	Interest in Training and Tools	-0.30	.172
	Existing Training and Tools	-0.13	.577
Weekly Interviews	Confidence in Interrogation Skills	0	.986
	Competence Across Vulnerable Groups	-0.24	.302
	Interest in Training and Tools	-0.22	.334
	Existing Training and Tools	-0.13	.570

*Note: *Statistically significant results ($p < 0.05$).*

T-Test Analysis

To explore potential differences in responses between groups, t-tests were performed on categorical independent variables, gender (female, male) and familiarity with psychological vulnerability (yes, no). The analyses examined whether these variables influenced the three dependent variables: Confidence in Interrogation Skills, Competence Across Vulnerable Groups, and Interest in Training and Tools. Welch's t-tests, which account for unequal variances, were used to compare the mean responses between the groups for each IV. For example, the analysis compared the mean confidence levels in conducting interviews (DV) between male and female officers (IV) and between those who were familiar or unfamiliar with the concept of psychological vulnerability. These tests aimed to identify any statistically significant differences in how these groups responded to the questionnaire.

A Welch's t-test revealed no statistically significant difference in confidence in interrogation skills between female officers ($M = 2.46$, $SD = 0.72$) and male officers ($M = 2.28$, $SD = 0.68$), $t(26) = 0.71$, $p = .49$. Similarly, no significant differences were found for competence across vulnerable groups between female officers ($M = 2.86$, $SD = 0.81$) and male officers ($M = 2.72$, $SD = 0.77$), $t(26) = 0.47$, $p = .65$, nor for interest in training and tools, female officers ($M = 2.43$, $SD = 0.85$) and male officers ($M = 2.70$, $SD = 0.92$), $t(26) = -0.47$, $p = .64$.

Similarly, no significant differences were found between officers familiar with psychological vulnerabilities ($M = 2.13$, $SD = 0.64$) and those unfamiliar ($M = 2.51$, $SD = 0.71$) in terms of confidence in interrogation skills, $t(20) = -1.73$, $p = .11$. Likewise, no significant differences emerged for competence across vulnerable groups, $t(20) = -1.66$, $p = .12$, or interest in training and tools, $t(20) = -1.67$, $p = .12$. The results indicated therefore no significant differences between male and female officers or between those familiar and unfamiliar with psychological vulnerabilities across any of the assessed variables. A complete table of values is available in Tables 7 and 8.

Table 7

Summary of T-Test Results for Gender

Dependent Variable	Female		Male		t	df	p
	(n = 14)		(n = 14)				
	M	SD	M	SD			
Confidence in Interrogation Skills	2.46	0.72	2.28	0.68	0.71	26	0.49
Competence Across Vulnerable Groups	2.86	0.81	2.72	0.77	0.47	26	0.65
Interest in Training and Tools	2.43	0.85	2.70	0.92	-0.47	26	0.64
Existing Training and Tools	3.71	1.12	4.18	1.05	-1.23	26	0.24

*Note: *Statistically significant results ($p < 0.05$).*

Table 8

Summary of T-Test Results for Familiarity with Vulnerability

	Yes	No
--	-----	----

Dependent Variable	(n = 7)		(n = 15)		t	df	p
	M	SD	M	SD			
Confidence in Interrogation Skills	2.13	0.64	2.51	0.71	-1.73	20	0.11
Competence Across Vulnerable Groups	2.52	0.79	2.98	0.85	-1.66	20	0.12
Interest in Training and Tools	2.07	0.89	2.95	0.96	-1.67	20	0.12
Existing Training and Tools	3.80	1.10	4.11	1.08	0.73	20	0.48

Note: *Statistically significant results ($p < 0.05$).

Qualitative Analysis

Although the number of responses was limited, and no participants agreed to participate in the planned interviews, the data that was collected still offered meaningful insights into the perceptions and needs of law enforcement officers regarding the interrogation of psychologically vulnerable individuals. A qualitative analysis was conducted using Braun and Clarke's (2006) reflexive approach to examine the responses to the open-ended questions. Four primary themes emerged, *Knowledge Gaps*, *Practical Challenges*, *Training Desirability*, and *Proposed Enhancements*. Within each theme, specific code groups were identified to categorise the responses. Direct quotations from participants illustrate key findings. Table 8 provides an overview of response frequencies, calculated as proportions of the total 30 responses.

Knowledge Gaps

Participants highlighted a lack of understanding of psychological vulnerabilities and the associated legal requirements for conducting interrogations. This theme encompasses three code groups, each representing a specific gap in officers' understanding: *lack of awareness of psychological vulnerabilities*, *uncertainty about legal requirements*, and *scepticism about assessment tools*. A response emphasised the need for clearer legal guidance. (e.g., "A brief overview, especially regarding the legal requirements for interrogating psychologically ill individuals, would be desirable.") While another Participant expressed scepticism about the practical utility of assessment tools unless they were underpinned by scientific validity. (e.g., "Questionnaires are only useful when they are

scientifically validated.”) This theme accounted for 40% (n = 12) of participant responses, demonstrating a significant gap in knowledge and legal clarity.

Practical Challenges

Difficulty in recognising signs of vulnerability during interviews was a recurring issue. Participants described challenges in applying their knowledge to real-world interrogations, which were grouped into three code categories: *difficulty recognising signs of vulnerability*, *lack of interrogation-specific training*, and *the need for better assessment tools*. Many participants felt inadequately equipped to identify and respond effectively to such signs, reflecting a pressing need for assessment tools. Officers noted difficulties in recognising and addressing psychological vulnerabilities during interrogations, reflecting a lack of specialised training. While some training on interacting with individuals with mental health issues existed, it often did not address interrogation-specific scenarios. One participant explained, “The topic of mentally ill individuals was addressed during deployment training, but it did not cover their interrogation.” Another officer emphasised the importance of targeted training, stating, “Training, particularly concerning dealing with mental illnesses, would be helpful.” Given that 30% (n = 9) of participants raised concerns about these challenges, it is evident that additional interrogation-focused training is necessary.

Training Desirability

Participants expressed a desire for structured, scenario-based training that would improve their confidence and competence in engaging with vulnerable individuals. This theme consists of three code groups: *interest in practical, hands-on training*, *the need for refresher courses*, and *recognition of personal knowledge gaps*. This aligns with quantitative findings indicating interest in skill enhancement. Officers noted the need to update their knowledge, with one participant commenting, “Yes, I would have liked something. The training was a long time ago.” Another participant expressed a preference for more comprehensive training opportunities, stating, “Further training methods would be desirable.” The fact that 20% (n = 6) of responses emphasised training needs highlights the growing awareness among officers of the importance of skill development in this area.

Proposed Enhancements

Participants provided suggestions to improve training programmes and assessment tools, calling for clearer explanations and practical focus. These were grouped into three code categories: *the need for clearer guidance on available tools*, *a preference for hands-on learning*, and *suggestions for improved training structures*. One officer expressed confusion about the available tools, commenting, “What exactly is this? An explanation would be great,” suggesting either a lack of familiarity with existing resources or that the provided information was insufficiently. Emphasising the importance of hands-on learning, another participant reiterated, “A training programme focusing on dealing with mental illnesses would be helpful.” While only 10% (n = 3) of responses specifically addressed proposed enhancements, they underscore the need for improved training structures and accessible tools.

Table 8

Qualitative analysis overview (total 30 answers)

Theme	Summary	Example	Frequencies	Percentages
Knowledge Gaps	Lack of understanding of psychological vulnerabilities and associated legal requirements.	A brief overview, especially regarding the legal requirements for interrogating psychologically ill individuals, would be desirable.	12	40%
Practical Challenges	Difficulty recognising signs of vulnerability and lack of interrogation-specific training.	The topic of mentally ill individuals was addressed during deployment training, but it did not cover their interrogation.	9	30%
Training Desirability	Desire for structured, scenario-based training	Further training methods would be desirable.	6	20%

	to enhance confidence and competence.			
Proposed Enhancements	Suggestions for practical, hands-on learning and clearer explanations of tools.	A training programme focusing on dealing with mental illnesses would be helpful.	3	10%

Discussion

Law enforcement officers face significant challenges when interviewing psychologically vulnerable individuals, requiring specialised techniques to recognise and respond to their unique needs. Individuals with mental disorders, mental disabilities, neurodiversity, or abnormal mental states demand tailored communication strategies to ensure fair and effective procedures. Inadequate training and the absence of standardised tools hinder officers' ability to identify and address vulnerability effectively (Gudjonsson, 2006; Kebbell et al., 2010). Adapting communication strategies and interrogation approaches to meet the needs of vulnerable individuals is crucial to prevent misunderstandings and ensure the reliability of testimonies (Bull, 2010). Legal and ethical obligations mandate specialised considerations to protect the rights of vulnerable individuals, as outlined in international frameworks and national guidelines (UNODC, 2017). However, the implementation of such measures varies across jurisdictions (Milne & Bull, 1999).

The study focused on explored the self-reported confidence, competence, and training needs of German law enforcement officers when interviewing psychologically vulnerable individuals, with the goal of detecting existing gaps. The findings suggest that German law enforcement officers have moderate to high confidence in their ability to prepare interviews and recognise signs of vulnerability among psychologically vulnerable individuals.

The analyses suggest a complex relationship between experience and confidence in interrogation skills. While officers with more time in their position generally report lower confidence, those who have undergone recent training feel more assured in their abilities. Research indicates that as professionals gain experience, they develop a deeper awareness

of the complexities and challenges inherent in their field, which can lead to more cautious self-assessment and reduced confidence in their skills (Thielgen et al., 2022). This pattern aligns with the Dunning-Kruger Effect, which describes how individuals with limited competence in a particular domain tend to overestimate their abilities, whereas those with greater expertise may underestimate theirs (Kruger & Dunning, 1999). This cognitive bias helps explain why less experienced officers might feel more confident in their interrogation skills compared to their more seasoned counterparts.

However, the ANOVA analysis provides further nuance to this pattern. Rather than confidence simply decreasing with experience, the results suggest that confidence varies depending on officers' length of service in their position. Post-hoc tests revealed that officers with moderate experience in their position reported greater confidence than those with less experience. However, confidence did not continue to increase indefinitely, as officers with the most extensive experience did not differ significantly from others. This suggests that confidence rises with experience up to a certain point, after which it stabilises, indicating that practical exposure plays a crucial role in shaping officers' perceptions of their skills. These findings refine the previous correlation results by highlighting that experience influences confidence in a non-linear way, with confidence peaking after a certain level of expertise rather than declining consistently.

Experienced officers who have not received regular training may feel less confident as they become more aware of the limitations of their previous methods since studies indicate that new recruits benefit from structured, updated training that includes recent developments in forensic psychology and best practices for interviewing vulnerable individuals (Van Beek & Bull, 2023). The Netherlands' Verhoor Kwetsbare Verdachten (VKV) training program, which integrates scenario-based learning and continuous professional development, has been shown to increase officers' confidence and competence in identifying vulnerability (Bouma, 2023). The study findings suggest that similar approaches could be beneficial in Germany to ensure sustained confidence and preparedness among officers at all career stages.

The results indicate as well that most officers did not receive formal training on psychological vulnerability during their police education, nor do they have access to further educational opportunities or appropriate assessment tools. This aligns with research by Herrington and Roberts (2012), who emphasise that police officers often lack comprehensive education on identifying and managing psychological vulnerabilities. Similarly, Young et al. (2013) found that officers had limited awareness of conditions such as AD(H)D and intellectual disabilities, which can significantly impact interview outcomes. The absence of specialised training means that officers may struggle to adapt their questioning techniques appropriately. Farrugia (2021) highlights the complexity of identifying vulnerability in police custody and the need for structured decision-making frameworks. Similarly, McKinnon and Grubin (2013) evaluated police custody screening procedures in the UK, finding them inadequate in detecting mental health and neurodevelopmental conditions. These studies suggest that without systematic assessment tools, officers are likely to overlook vulnerabilities, potentially leading to unjust outcomes. Officers expressed uncertainty about psychological vulnerability and the legal requirements surrounding it, aligning with previous research that highlights gaps in officers' knowledge. Participants specifically mentioned needing clearer legal guidance on when and how to interrogate vulnerable individuals, further reinforcing the need for structured training programs.

In addition to gaps in training, the ANOVA analysis found that neither Age nor Year of Training significantly affected Confidence, Competence, or Interest in Training. This suggests that recency of training alone does not necessarily lead to increased confidence, reinforcing the need for continuous professional development opportunities rather than relying on one-time training interventions. Officers appear to develop confidence over time, particularly as they accumulate practical experience rather than simply benefiting from recent training alone.

Although there is interest in such tools, their perceived usefulness is rated moderately. A similar pattern regarding procedural information was observed in Brieger (2022), who examined how providing procedural information influenced the cooperation and anxiety levels of vulnerable individuals in investigative interviews. While the study did not

focus on officers' perceptions of procedural tools, it highlights the potential impact that structured procedural guidance can have on interview outcomes. This suggests that alongside tool development, further education on their implementation and benefits is necessary to ensure effective adoption. The findings also align with Bélanger et al. (2023), who stress that police interviews are inherently high-stress situations for both officers and suspects, often exacerbating vulnerabilities. Without proper training, officers may misinterpret signs of stress, anxiety, or neurodevelopmental disorders as uncooperativeness or dishonesty, leading to flawed investigative outcomes. Officers reported difficulties in recognising vulnerability and adapting their approach, with many expressing the need for structured, scenario-based training. Participants also suggested improvements in training materials and assessment tools to enhance their ability to manage psychologically vulnerable individuals effectively.

The qualitative analysis revealed four key themes: a lack of understanding of psychological vulnerabilities and legal requirements, practical challenges in recognising signs of vulnerability, a strong desire for structured scenario-based training, and suggestions for improvements in training and assessment tools. Participants expressed a clear need for practical, hands-on learning and better resources to support their work. Interestingly, these findings contradict the confidence that participants initially reported at the beginning of the study. While officers initially expressed a moderate to high level of confidence in their ability to conduct interviews with vulnerable individuals, their responses during qualitative discussions suggest a deeper recognition of gaps in their knowledge and skills. This discrepancy could indicate that, when initially asked, officers feel confident in their abilities; however, upon further reflection and consideration of specific challenges, they acknowledge the need for more information, clearer guidelines, and enhanced training to effectively support vulnerable individuals during interviews.

This contradiction aligns with a broader trend identified in previous research on police training and vulnerability awareness. Herrington and Roberts (2012) found that while officers may believe they are adequately prepared to manage vulnerable individuals, their practical

experience often reveals gaps in their skills. Similarly, Bélanger et al. (2023) found that officers frequently misinterpret stress-related behaviours as resistance, reinforcing the need for structured training on psychological vulnerabilities. This supports the argument that initial confidence may be based on a superficial understanding, whereas in-depth engagement with real cases highlights the need for further education and support. The findings also align with studies examining the effectiveness of training programs in improving officers' ability to handle vulnerable suspects. Research by Cunial et al. (2020) suggests that scenario-based training and exposure to real-world cases improve officers' ability to recognise vulnerabilities and adapt their interview techniques accordingly. The officers' call for structured, scenario-based training mirrors findings from police training evaluations in the UK and the Netherlands, where continuous professional development is a key component of ensuring high-quality police interviewing practices (Van Beek & Bull, 2023; Bouma, 2023).

Comparison with Police Practices in England and the Netherlands

This study underscores the challenges that German law enforcement officers face when interviewing psychologically vulnerable individuals. Given these challenges, it is valuable to examine how other countries have approached similar issues. By looking at established frameworks in England and the Netherlands, where it seems that structured legal safeguards and specialised training programs have been more implemented, insights could be gained into potential improvements for the German system.

When comparing police approaches to interviewing psychologically vulnerable individuals, it is evident that practices and policies differ across countries. Germany, as a member of the European Union, is bound by EU directives on procedural safeguards for suspects, including those who are vulnerable (Mergaerts & Dehaghani, 2020). While these directives establish minimum legal protections, research suggests that their implementation across EU member states varies significantly, with gaps remaining in how vulnerability is assessed and accommodated in practice (Cape & Hodgson, 2014). Germany's adherence to these EU regulations provides a legal framework for safeguarding vulnerable individuals, yet the practical enforcement of these rights in police interviews requires further scrutiny. Studies

indicate that many suspects, particularly those with psychological vulnerabilities, struggle to fully understand their rights when procedural information is only provided in written form or through standardised verbal explanations (McKinnon & Grubin, 2013). Ensuring that procedural information is delivered in an accessible, tailored manner, such as through visual aids or simplified explanations, could significantly enhance comprehension and engagement in police interviews.

In England, in cases involving vulnerable individuals, Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) guidelines provide additional support by outlining how to adapt interviews to the specific needs of vulnerable witnesses and suspects (Van Beek & Bull, 2023). Additionally, the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984, particularly Code C, provides a structured legal framework for handling vulnerable suspects. This framework mandates the presence of an Appropriate Adult (AA) to assist vulnerable individuals, ensuring that their rights are upheld during police interviews (The Stationery Office, 2012). Despite these robust frameworks, research suggests that their practical implementation is inconsistent, with officers often struggling to identify and support vulnerable individuals effectively (Farrugia & Gabbert, 2020; Vaughan et al., 2024)

The Dutch police employ the Scenario's Onderzoekende Methode (SOM), an investigative model that integrates elements of strategic evidence disclosure and structured planning through the PLATO tool (Person, Location, Action, Time, and Object). This model seeks to improve the strategic use of information while ensuring interviews remain fair and reliable. This framework, which synthesises evidence-based approaches, offers a structured methodology with a strong emphasis on investigative strategy (Van Beek & Bull, 2023). Additionally, in the Netherlands, the police have implemented the Verhoren van Kwetsbare Verdachten (VKV) training, which includes extensive practical and theoretical components, focusing on how to detect signs of vulnerability and implement appropriate safeguards (Bouma, 2024). This training spans over 23 weeks and includes practical exercises, theoretical lessons, and an examination comprising a written preparation and a simulated interview with a vulnerable suspect (Wessels, 2024). The VKV training has been shown to

improve officers' understanding and competence in handling vulnerable suspects, although areas such as organisational support and bias awareness remain challenges for effective implementation (Wessels, 2024). Furthermore, the Vragenlijst Indicatie Kwetsbaarheid (VIK), a vulnerability screening tool developed by the Dutch Police Academy, supports officers in systematically assessing a suspect's vulnerability based on socio-economic and psychological factors (Bouma, 2024).

Germany's approach to police interviewing seems less standardised compared to the UK and the Netherlands, with practices varying across federal states. Unlike the UK and Dutch frameworks, Germany seems to lack comprehensive national guidelines equivalent to Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) 1984, particularly Code C, Verhoor Kwetsbare Verdachten (VKV), Vragenlijst Indicatie Kwetsbaarheid (VIK), or Scenario's Onderzoekende Methode (SOM), highlighting the need for improved procedural consistency and specialised training. The absence of clear guidelines and specialised training programmes in Germany places officers at a disadvantage compared to their counterparts in England and the Netherlands.

This study highlights the need for Germany to adopt a more structured approach to managing psychological vulnerabilities in police interviews, potentially drawing lessons from the established frameworks in other countries. One key recommendation emerging from both the literature review and this study is the development of standardised vulnerability screening tools tailored for law enforcement (Steinhauer, 2024). Implementing pre-interview screening tools for psychological vulnerabilities, as piloted in the UK, could assist officers in making informed decisions regarding interview adaptations. Additionally, integrating mandatory training programmes that focus on recognising and accommodating psychological vulnerabilities, as seen in the Netherlands, would improve officers' ability to conduct fair and effective interviews. Given the significant risks associated with miscommunication, false confessions, and procedural inconsistencies, developing structured guidelines and mandatory training in Germany is essential for aligning its practices with international best standards (Steinhauer, 2024).

Recommendations for Future Research and the Police Practices in Germany

Future research and developments in police practices in Germany should focus on enhancing the identification and management of psychologically vulnerable individuals during police interviews. Drawing from the experiences of England and the Netherlands, as well as the findings of this study, several key areas require further exploration and strategic improvements. One essential avenue for future research is the development and implementation of standardised assessment tools tailored to the German context. Countries such as the Netherlands have introduced structured tools like the Vragenlijst Indicatie Kwetsbaarheid (VIK) to systematically assess vulnerability and inform police officers on appropriate interview strategies (Bouma, 2024). Germany seems to lack such standardised instruments, and future research should explore their feasibility and effectiveness in improving interview outcomes. Despite a clear interest in assessment tools in this study, their perceived usefulness remained moderate. Investigating how officers can be trained to use such tools effectively would be crucial in ensuring consistent identification and management of vulnerabilities.

Furthermore, evaluating the effectiveness of existing police training programmes is critical to identifying areas for improvement. The current training landscape in Germany seems to lack a comprehensive, structured approach to psychological vulnerability, leaving officers to rely on experience rather than formal guidelines. Additionally, the findings of this study highlight the lack of formal training on psychological vulnerability in police education, with officers reporting only moderate availability of further educational opportunities. Future research should focus on developing and accessing training programmes that incorporate scenario-based learning and interdisciplinary collaboration with mental health professionals. Studies have shown that experiential learning methods, which are already widely used in the Netherlands, contribute to improved officers' confidence and competence in dealing with vulnerable individuals.

Another key area of investigation should be the impact of procedural safeguards on vulnerable suspects. Research from the Netherlands indicates that providing procedural

information before interviews can reduce anxiety and increase cooperation, particularly among neurodivergent individuals (Brieger, 2022). Future studies should examine whether similar approaches could enhance the experience of suspects in Germany, ensuring they fully understand their rights and the interview process, thus improving the quality of information obtained and protecting the integrity of investigations.

Germany's federal policing system presents an additional challenge, with varying practices across different states (Bundesländer). Comparative research should be conducted to assess how different regions handle vulnerable suspects and identify best practices that could be harmonised at the national level. Understanding these regional differences is essential for developing cohesive national guidelines that can be implemented uniformly across law enforcement agencies.

From a practical standpoint, the future of police practices in Germany must prioritise the implementation of specialised training programmes focused on interviewing vulnerable individuals. Drawing from successful models in the UK and the Netherlands, German police forces should introduce mandatory training that includes practical exercises, role-playing scenarios, and interdisciplinary collaboration with psychologists and social workers. This approach would ensure officers are better equipped to recognise and respond to vulnerabilities effectively. Additionally, integrating a multidisciplinary approach by involving mental health professionals and social services can provide crucial support in identifying and addressing vulnerabilities. Establishing partnerships with external organisations can ensure a more comprehensive response, ultimately improving outcomes for vulnerable individuals while maintaining public trust in law enforcement.

The role of technology could also be considered in the future of police interviewing practices. The use of digital tools and artificial intelligence to assist in vulnerability screening could offer new opportunities to enhance the identification process and ensure appropriate accommodations are provided.

Limitations and strengths

This study employed a mixed-methods design, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to explore police officers' perceptions and experiences related to interviewing psychologically vulnerable individuals. A semi-structured interview phase with officers and experts was planned; however, it was not conducted due to a lack of participation. Consequently, the study relied solely on the questionnaire data, which limited the depth of qualitative insights that could have been obtained through interviews.

A significant limitation of the study was the small sample size. The questionnaire was distributed to 37 police officers in Berlin, but two individuals declined to provide informed consent, leaving 35 participants who initiated the survey. Of these, only 28 answered at least part of the questionnaire, and 21 participants completed it in its entirety. The relatively low participation rate may have impacted the representativeness of the findings, limiting their generalisability to a broader population of law enforcement officers. Additionally, recruitment was facilitated through a third party, which restricted the researcher's direct communication with potential participants. This lack of direct contact meant there was no control over how the study was presented to officers or how they were motivated to participate and complete the survey. As a result, potential biases in participation and engagement may have influenced the data as well.

Despite these limitations, the study has several strengths. As a pioneering investigation into this topic within Germany, specifically in Berlin, it provides valuable initial insights into police officers' perspectives on dealing with psychologically vulnerable individuals, an area where German-specific research remains limited and underexplored. Germany seems to lack nationally standardised procedures for recognising and accommodating psychological vulnerabilities. This means that officers' approaches and experiences in handling such cases may differ significantly, making it crucial to understand their perceptions, challenges, and training gaps within the German legal and policing system. This exploratory nature of the research helps to identify key challenges and areas for further investigation, serving as a foundation for future studies that can build upon these preliminary findings with larger and more diverse samples. Furthermore, the mixed-methods approach

allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of officers' self-reported confidence, competence, and training needs, combining quantitative data with qualitative reflections from participants.

Conclusion

To conclude, the findings of this study highlight the need for significant improvements in police practices concerning psychologically vulnerable individuals in Germany. Officers reported gaps in training, limited access to standardised assessment tools, and inconsistencies in identifying vulnerabilities, all of which pose risks to the fairness and effectiveness of police interviews. Additionally, fostering interdisciplinary collaboration with mental health professionals and social services can provide crucial support, enhancing both identification and response strategies for vulnerable individuals.

Beyond internal reforms, raising public awareness about psychological vulnerabilities is essential for fostering a broader understanding of the challenges faced by individuals with neurodevelopmental conditions, mental health disorders, or cognitive impairments. Increased awareness can help reduce stigma, encourage early identification of vulnerabilities, and promote more inclusive policies, ensuring that individuals receive appropriate support not only in police settings but throughout society. Public engagement and education campaigns can further strengthen trust between communities and law enforcement, facilitating cooperation and improving overall policing outcomes.

Finally, it is crucial to recognise that vulnerability is not a fixed characteristic, but rather a dynamic state influenced by the stress and pressure of police interviews. The inherently stressful nature of police interviews, as highlighted in the introduction of this research, suggests that all individuals, regardless of their formal classification as vulnerable, may experience psychological distress that affects their ability to provide reliable information (Kassin et al., 2009; Bélanger et al., 2023). The intense pressure of police interviews, the unfamiliar and intimidating environment, and the perceived power imbalance can all contribute to increased anxiety and cognitive challenges (Davis & O'Donohue, 2004; Holmberg, 2004). Given this reality, police forces should consider adopting vulnerability-

informed interviewing techniques as standard practice for all suspects. By integrating elements such as procedural information, rapport-building strategies, and stress-reduction techniques into all police interviews, officers can create a more supportive environment that benefits all individuals, ensuring fairness and improving the quality of information obtained.

In conclusion, the future of police interview practices in Germany should not only focus on improving procedures for individuals identified as vulnerable but should also acknowledge that the stress and psychological demands of police interviews can impact anyone. As such, there is a strong case for reevaluating current interview methods and incorporating vulnerability-informed approaches across all police interactions to enhance fairness, reliability, and justice within the legal system.

Reference list

- Bagnall, R., Cadman, A., Russell, A., Brosnan, M., Otte, M., & Maras, K. L. (2023). Police suspect interviews with autistic adults: The impact of truth telling versus deception on testimony. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1117415>
- Baker-Eck, B., Bull, R., & Walsh, D. (2020). Investigative empathy: a strength scale of empathy based on European police perspectives. *Psychiatry Psychology and Law*, 27(3), 412–427. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13218719.2020.1751333>
- Bélanger, P. L., Fortin, F., Deslauriers-Varin, N., & Paquette, S. (2023). Exploring Interrogation-Related Stressors: Factors Influencing Apparent Stress in Investigative Interviews with Suspects. *Canadian Journal of Criminology and Criminal Justice/La Revue Canadienne De Criminologie Et De Justice Pénale*, 65(3), 47–67. <https://doi.org/10.3138/cjccj-2023-0032>
- Bouma, D. (2023). *Analysis of Qualitative Questions in Assessing a Screening Tool: An Evaluation* [Dissertation]. University of Twente in Collaboration with Police Academy.
- Brieger, L. (2022). *Examining the Effect of Procedural Information on Vulnerable Individuals' Cooperation and Anxiety Levels within Investigative Interviews* [Dissertation, University of Twente]. https://essay.utwente.nl/91488/1/Brieger_BA_BMS.pdf
- British Dyslexia Association. (2021). *Dyslexia and interviews: 5 tips that changed the way I approach them for the better - British Dyslexia Association*. <https://www.bdadyslexia.org.uk/news/dyslexia-and-interviews-5-tips-that-changed-the-way-i-approach-them-for-the-better>
- Canals, J., Morales-Hidalgo, P., Voltas, N., & Hernández-Martínez, C. (2024). Prevalence of comorbidity of autism and ADHD and associated characteristics in school population: EPINED study. *Autism Research*, 17(6), 1276–1286. <https://doi.org/10.1002/aur.3146>
- Cape, E., & Hodgson, J. (2014). The right to access to a lawyer at police stations: making the European Union directive work in practice. *New Journal of European Criminal Law*, 5(4), 450–479. <https://doi.org/10.1177/203228441400500404>

- Carrier, A. C. (2020). *THE EXPERIENCES OF POLICE OFFICERS EXPOSED TO DAILY TRAUMA AS A COURSE OF THEIR EMPLOYMENT: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY* [Dissertation, Sam Houston State University]. <https://shsu-ir.tdl.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/bac75873-e5d2-469b-baab-edbab5ea5410/content>
- Catlin, M., Wilson, D. B., Redlich, A. D., Bettens, T., Meissner, C. A., Bhatt, S., & Brandon, S. E. (2024). Interview and interrogation methods and their effects on true and false confessions: A systematic review update and extension. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 20(4). <https://doi.org/10.1002/cl2.1441>
- Cras, S. (2014). The Directive on the right of access to a lawyer in criminal proceedings and in European arrest warrant proceedings. *Eucrim – the European Criminal Law Associations Forum*. <https://doi.org/10.30709/eucrim-2014-005>
- Cunial, K. J., Casey, L. M., Bell, C., & Kebbell, M. R. (2020). Investigative interviewing of youth with ADHD – recommendations for detective training. *Psychiatry Psychology and Law*, 27(5), 797–814. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13218719.2020.1742241>
- Davis, D., & O'Donohue, W. T. (2004). The Road to Perdition. In *Elsevier eBooks* (pp. 897–996). <https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-012524196-0/50037-1>
- Dumortier, J. (2022). *Regulation (EU) No 910/2014 on Electronic Identification and Trust Services for Electronic Transactions in the Internal Market (EIDAS Regulation)*. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781800372092.00015>
- Duran, F., Woodhams, J., & Bishopp, D. (2018). An interview study of the experiences of police officers in regard to psychological contract and wellbeing. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, 34(2), 184–198. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11896-018-9275-z>
- Explanatory Memorandum to COM(2019)560 - Implementation of Directive 2013/48/EU on the right of access to a lawyer and to communicate with third persons and with consular authorities while deprived of liberty - EU monitor*. (n.d.). https://www.eumonitor.eu/9353000/1/j4nvhdjdk3hydzq_j9vvik7m1c3gyxp/vl29iiss2syr

Fair Trials International. (2013). *CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS AND DEFENCE RIGHTS IN GERMANY*.

Farrugia, L. (2021). Identifying vulnerability in police custody: Making sense of information provided to custody officers. *Journal of Forensic and Legal Medicine*, 80, 102169. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jflm.2021.102169>

Farrugia, L., & Gabbert, F. (2019). Vulnerable suspects in police interviews: Exploring current practice in England and Wales. *Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offender Profiling*, 17(1), 17–30. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jip.1537>

Forrest, K. D., Wadkins, T., & Miller, R. L. (2002). The Role of Preexisting Stress on False Confessions: An Empirical Study. *ResearchGate*. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237421762_The_Role_of_Preexisting_Stress_on_False_Confessions_An_Empirical_Study

Freckelton, I. (2019). Attention Deficit hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and the criminal law. *Psychiatry Psychology and Law*, 26(6), 817–840. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13218719.2019.1695266>

Geijssen, K., De Ruiter, C., & Kop, N. (2018). Identifying psychological vulnerabilities: Studies on police suspects' mental health issues and police officers' views. *Cogent Psychology*, 5(1), 1462133. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311908.2018.1462133>

Gentile, J. P., Atiq, R., & Gillig, P. M. (2006, August 1). *Adult ADHD: diagnosis, differential diagnosis, and medication management*. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2957278/>

German Code of Criminal Procedure (Strafprozeßordnung – StPO). (n.d.). https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch_stpo/englisch_stpo.html

Golub, T. L., & Pavliček, J. (2013). Gender Differences in Interview Tactics with Suspects. *Revija Za Kriminalistiko in Kriminologijo*, 64(3), 267–274. <https://www.bib.irb.hr/656263>

Gudjonsson, G. H. (2002). *The Psychology of interrogations and confessions*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470713297>

- Gudjonsson, G. H. (2010). Psychological vulnerabilities during police interviews. Why are they important? *Legal and Criminological Psychology*, 15(2), 161–175.
<https://doi.org/10.1348/135532510x500064>
- Gudjonsson, G. H., Sigurdsson, J. F., Bragason, O. O., Newton, A. K., & Einarsson, E. (2008). Interrogative suggestibility, compliance and false confessions among prisoners and their relationship with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) symptoms. *Psychological Medicine*, 38(7), 1037–1044.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/s0033291708002882>
- Gudjonsson, G. H., Sigurdsson, J. F., Sigfusdottir, I. D., Asgeirsdottir, B. B., González, R. A., & Young, S. (2015). A national epidemiological study investigating risk factors for police interrogation and false confession among juveniles and young persons. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 51(3), 359–367.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s00127-015-1145-8>
- Herrington, V., & Roberts, K. (2012). Addressing psychological vulnerability in the police suspect interview. *Policing a Journal of Policy and Practice*, 6(2), 177–186.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/police/par057>
- Holmberg, U. (2004). *POLICE INTERVIEWS WITH VICTIMS AND SUSPECTS OF VIOLENT AND SEXUAL CRIMES; Interviewees' experiences and interview outcomes* [Doctoral Dissertation, Stockholm University]. <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:345247/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
- Hours, C., Recasens, C., & Baleyte, J. (2022). ASD and ADHD Comorbidity: What Are We Talking About? *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyt.2022.837424>
- Kassin, S. M., Drizin, S. A., Grisso, T., Gudjonsson, G. H., Leo, R. A., & Redlich, A. D. (2009). Police-induced confessions: Risk factors and recommendations. *Law And Human Behavior*, 34(1), 3–38. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10979-009-9188-6>
- Kruger, J., & Dunning, D. (1999). Unskilled and unaware of it: How difficulties in recognizing one's own incompetence lead to inflated self-assessments. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 77(6), 1121–1134. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.77.6.1121>

- Lesch, K. (2019). Editorial: Can dysregulated myelination be linked to ADHD pathogenesis and persistence? *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 60(3), 229–231.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/jcpp.13031>
- Levin, S. (2019, October 16). “It breaks down innocent people”: the interrogation method at center of Ava DuVernay lawsuit. *The Guardian*.
<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2019/oct/15/when-they-see-us-ava-duvernay-netflix-lawsuit-reid>
- Maras, K. (2022, October 19). *Police interviewing of autistic people*. <https://autism.org.uk/>; Dr Katie Maras. <https://autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/professional-practice/police-interviews>
- Melanie Jameson, British Dyslexia Association, & DANDA. (2013). *Good practice guide for justice professionals*. <https://www.dyslexia-malvern.co.uk/docs/justice/Justice%20guide%20to%20SpLDs.pdf>
- Mergaerts, L., & Dehaghani, R. (2020). Protecting vulnerable suspects in police investigations in Europe: Lessons learned from England and Wales and Belgium. *New Journal of European Criminal Law*, 11(3), 313–334.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2032284420943299>
- Murphy, D. (2018). Interviewing individuals with an autism spectrum disorder in forensic settings. *International Journal of Forensic Mental Health*, 17(4), 310–320.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14999013.2018.1518939>
- Otgaar, H., Schell-Leugers, J. M., Howe, M. L., De La Fuente Vilar, A., Houben, S. T. L., & Merckelbach, H. (2021). The link between suggestibility, compliance, and false confessions: A review using experimental and field studies. *Applied Cognitive Psychology*, 35(2), 445–455. <https://doi.org/10.1002/acp.3788>
- Oxburgh, G., & Ost, J. (2011). The Use and Efficacy of Empathy in Police Interviews with Suspects of Sexual Offences. *Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offender Profiling*, 8(2), 178–188. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jip.143>

- Pearse, J. (1995). Police interviewing: The identification of vulnerabilities. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 5(3), 147–159.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/casp.2450050302>
- Right to access a lawyer in criminal and European warrant arrest proceedings | EUR-Lex.*
(n.d.). https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=legisum%3A2303_2
- Roscoe, M. J., Gough, S., Orr, R., & Baumann, O. (2024). A Comparison of Recall Methods for High-Stress Critical Incidents in Police Training. *Heliyon*, 10(17), e36562.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e36562>
- Serine, A. (2014). The relationship between cognitive distortions and ADHD after accounting for depression, anxiety, and personality pathology [Dissertation, Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine]. In *DigitalCommons@PCOM*.
http://digitalcommons.pcom.edu/psychology_dissertations/403
- Siberry, A. (2021). *Diversity, Difference or Disorder? Exploring neurodiversity in police-community partnerships* [PhD, The University of Sheffield].
<https://www.n8prp.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/315/2021/11/Alice-Siberry-N8-Report-PhD.pdf>
- Song, P., Zha, M., Yang, Q., Zhang, Y., Li, X., & Rudan, I. (2021). The prevalence of adult attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder: A global systematic review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Global Health*, 11. <https://doi.org/10.7189/jogh.11.04009>
- Steinhauer, J. (2024). *Literature review The Screening of AD(H)D before Police Interviews* [Unpublished Internship Product]. University of Twente.
- Stenner, P., O'Dell, L., & Davies, A. (2019). Adult women and ADHD: On the temporal dimensions of ADHD identities. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 49(2), 179–197. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jtsb.12198>
- Targum, S. D., & Adler, L. A. (2015). Our current understanding of adult ADHD. *PubMed*, 11(11–12), 30–35. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/25621186>
- The Stationery Office. (2012). *REVISED CODE OF PRACTICE IN CONNECTION WITH: THE DETENTION, TREATMENT AND QUESTIONING BY POLICE OFFICERS OF*

PERSONS IN POLICE DETENTION UNDER SECTION 41 OF, AND SCHEDULE 8 TO, THE TERRORISM ACT 2000 THE TREATMENT AND QUESTIONING BY POLICE OFFICERS OF DETAINED PERSONS IN RESPECT OF WHOM AN AUTHORISATION TO QUESTION AFTER CHARGE HAS BEEN GIVEN UNDER SECTION 22 OF THE COUNTER-TERRORISM ACT 2008 POLICE AND CRIMINAL EVIDENCE ACT 1984 (PACE) – CODE H.

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7cb70de5274a38e57564ee/9780108511653.pdf>

Thielgen, M. M., Schade, S., & Niegisch, P. (2022). Police Officers' interrogation Expertise and Major Objectives in Police Service and training: A Comprehensive Overview of the literature. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.823179>

Van Beek, M., & Bull, R. (2023). Strategic Interviewing in practice: Introducing a Dutch framework for interviews with suspects. *Investigative Interviewing: Research & Practice*, 13(1). https://iirg.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/ill-RP-Journal-Volume13_2023.pdf

Vaughan, M., Milne, R., Cherryman, J., & Dalton, G. (2024). Managing investigative interviews with vulnerable suspects in the UK: do specialist interview managers (IM's) understand vulnerability? *Psychology Crime and Law*, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1068316x.2024.2341078>

Verfahrensgrundsätze | NRW-Justiz. (n.d.).

<https://www.justiz.nrw.de/BS/lebenslagen/Strafrecht/verfahren/verfahrensgrundsaeetze>

Vrij, A., Leal, S., & Fisher, R. P. (2023). Interviewing to Detect Lies about Opinions: The Devil's Advocate approach. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal*, 10(12), 245–252. <https://doi.org/10.14738/assrj.1012.16027>

Vrij, A., Mann, S., Kristen, S., & Fisher, R. P. (2007). Cues to deception and ability to detect lies as a function of police interview styles. *Law And Human Behavior*, 31(5), 499–518. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10979-006-9066-4>

- Wessels, H. (2024). *Evaluating the effectiveness of the training Verhoren van Kwetsbare Verdachten (VKV) (Investigative Interviewing Vulnerable Suspects) given by the Dutch Police Academy*. [Unpublished Internship Product]. University of Twente.
- Why remote assistance breaches the EU Directive on the right of access to a lawyer. (2021, December 21). Fair Trials. Retrieved January 19, 2025, from <https://www.fairtrials.org/articles/publications/why-remote-assistance-breaches-the-eu-directive-on-the-right-of-access-to-a-lawyer/>
- Young, S., Adamo, N., Ásgeirsdóttir, B. B., Branney, P., Beckett, M., Colley, W., Cubbin, S., Deeley, Q., Farrag, E., Gudjonsson, G., Hill, P., Hollingdale, J., Kilic, O., Lloyd, T., Mason, P., Paliokosta, E., Perecherla, S., Sedgwick, J., Skirrow, C., . . . Woodhouse, E. (2020). Females with ADHD: An expert consensus statement taking a lifespan approach providing guidance for the identification and treatment of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder in girls and women. *BMC Psychiatry*, 20(1).
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-020-02707-9>
- Young, S., Goodwin, E. J., Sedgwick, O., & Gudjonsson, G. H. (2013). The effectiveness of police custody assessments in identifying suspects with intellectual disabilities and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. *BMC Medicine*, 11(1).
<https://doi.org/10.1186/1741-7015-11-248>

Appendix

Appendix A

Tables

Table 1

Frequencies of Demographics

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	14	50%
	Female	14	50%
Age	Under 25	2	7%
	25 – 34	9	32%
	35 – 44	5	18%
	45 – 54	7	25%
	55 or older	5	18%
What function or position do you currently hold in the police force?	Clerk	19	68%
	„Sachbearbeiter/in“		
	Operational and Investigative Roles*	4	14%
	Leadership and Supervisory Positions**	3	11%
	Immediate Response and Field Work***	2	7%
In which year did you start your training with the police?	1983 – 1999	12	43%
	2000 – 2010	6	21%
	2015 – 2021	10	36%
How long have you been working for the police in your current position?	Less than a year	5	18%
	1 – 5	12	43%
	6 – 10	4	14%

	11 – 15	1	4%
	More than 16 years	6	21%
How many years have you	Less than a year	3	11%
been conducting	1 – 5	10	36%
interrogations?	6 – 10	2	7%
	11 – 15	3	11%
	More than 16 years	10	36%
How many interviews do you	0	1	4%
conduct on average in a week?	1	11	38%
	2	5	18%
	3 – 7	10	36%
	10	1	4%
Are you familiar with the	Yes	7	25%
concept of psychological	No	15	54%
vulnerability (e.g. ADHD, ASD,	I don't know / no answer	6	21%
dyslexia)?			
Do you know anyone in your	Yes	13	46%
circle of friends or family who	No	14	50%
has a psychological	I don't know / no answer	1	4%
vulnerability (e.g. ADHD, ASD,			
dyslexia)?			
Have you worked with people	Yes	4	14%
who have a psychological	No	24	86%
vulnerability outside of your	I don't know / no answer	0	0%
work with the police? If yes,			
please explain.			

* Operational and Investigative Roles includes: Vorgangsbearbeitung (Case Processing), Kriminalkommissar (Criminal Investigator), Mitarbeiter im AK (Working Group Member)

** Leadership and Supervisory Positions includes: Führungskraft gD (Leadership in Higher Service), Stellvertretende Schichtleiterin (Deputy Shift Leader), KL (V) (Leadership in Specialized Roles)

*** Immediate Response and Field Work includes: Sofortbearbeitung (Immediate Processing), PVB (Police Officer in Service)

Table 2

Own skills (N = 23)

I am confident...	M	SD
... to assess my knowledge correctly in order to prepare an interview with a vulnerable person.	3.30	0.97
... prepare an interview with a vulnerable person in an appropriate manner.	3.35	0.98
... accurately assess my ability to recognise signs that indicate a vulnerable person.	3.57	0.90
... reliably identify vulnerable persons.	3.04	0.98
... correctly assess my knowledge in order to translate signs of vulnerability into appropriate follow-up actions.	3.30	1.02
... recognise vulnerable persons and initiate the necessary follow-up measures.	3.22	0.90
... correctly assess my own abilities to interview a vulnerable person.	3.61	0.89
... adapt my approach to the specific needs and circumstances of the vulnerable person during the interview.	3.87	0.63
... take appropriate account of the interests of the persons directly involved (e.g. suspects, victims, surviving relatives) during the interview.	4.04	0.56

... to adapt my choice of words appropriately to the age, vulnerability and developmental stage of the person during the interrogation.	4.17	0.58
... to adapt my questions appropriately to the age, vulnerability and developmental stage of the person during the interrogation.	4.09	0.6
... adapt the pace of the interrogation to the age, vulnerability and developmental stage of the person during the interrogation.	4.22	0.6
... adapt my social behaviour to the person's age, need for protection and level of development during the interrogation.	4.00	0.52
... to assess my knowledge correctly in order to prepare an interview with a vulnerable person.	3.61	0.84
... prepare an interview with a vulnerable person in an appropriate manner.	3.87	0.76
... to support, coach and advise colleagues in the interrogation of vulnerable persons.	3.09	1.2
Would you be interested in improving your skills and expertise in dealing with vulnerable persons during interrogations?	3.83	1.19

Note: Likert scale from 1(I strongly disagree) to 5 (I strongly agree)

Table 7

Summary of T-Test Results for Gender

Dependent Variable	Female (n = 14)		Male (n = 14)		t	df	p
	M	SD	M	SD			
Confidence in Interrogation Skills	2.46	0.72	2.28	0.68	0.71	26	0.49
Competence Across Vulnerable Groups	2.86	0.81	2.72	0.77	0.47	26	0.65
Interest in Training and Tools	2.43	0.85	2.70	0.92	-0.47	26	0.64
Existing Training and Tools	3.71	1.12	4.18	1.05	-1.23	26	0.24

*Note: *Statistically significant results ($p < 0.05$).*

Table 8*Summary of T-Test Results for Familiarity with Vulnerability*

Dependent Variable	Yes		No		t	df	p
	(n = 7)		(n = 15)				
	M	SD	M	SD			
Confidence in Interrogation Skills	2.13	0.64	2.51	0.71	-1.73	20	0.11
Competence Across Vulnerable Groups	2.52	0.79	2.98	0.85	-1.66	20	0.12
Interest in Training and Tools	2.07	0.89	2.95	0.96	-1.67	20	0.12
Existing Training and Tools	3.80	1.10	4.11	1.08	0.73	20	0.48

*Note: *Statistically significant results ($p < 0.05$).*

Appendix B

Complete Questionnaire (German)

Informierte Einwilligung:

Ziel der Studie

Vernehmungen von Personen mit psychologischer Schutzbedürftigkeit, wie beispielsweise Menschen mit ADHS, Autismus oder Dyslexie gestalten sich besonders schwierig. Da diese Diagnosen zunehmend häufiger gestellt werden und das Bewusstsein für die Bedürfnisse dieser Personen wächst, wird es immer wichtiger, entsprechende Vorgehensweisen zu etablieren, um effiziente und erfolgreiche Vernehmungen durchzuführen

In dieser Studie wird erforscht, welche Maßnahmen und Strategien bereits angewandt werden und, welche Unterstützung Polizeibeamtinnen und -beamte in diesem Zusammenhang als sinnvoll erachten.

Erklärung zur Psychologischen Schutzbedürftigkeit

Psychologische Schutzbedürftigkeit sind Risikofaktoren, die das Verhalten und somit die Aussagen einer zu vernehmenden Person beeinflussen können und potenziell zu ungenauen Aussagen oder sogar falschen Geständnisse führen können.

Es gibt vier Haupttypen psychologischer Schutzbedürftigkeit:

- **Psychische Erkrankungen:** z. B. Depressionen, Angststörungen, Psychosen
- **Geistige Behinderungen:** Einschränkungen der kognitiven Fähigkeiten
- **Neurodiversität:** ADHS, Autismus, Dyslexie
- **Abnorme psychische Zustände:** z. B. extremer Stress, Entzug, Schlafmangel

Ablauf der Studie

Als Teilnehmer dieser Studie werden Sie um Ihre Perspektive hinsichtlich der Befragung von Personen mit psychologischer Schutzbedürftigkeit gebeten. Es werden Ihnen verschiedene Fragen zu Ihren bisherigen Erfahrungen sowie den Maßnahmen, die Sie bereits anwenden oder als hilfreich empfinden, gestellt. Ihre Teilnahme wird etwa 15 bis 20 Minuten in Anspruch nehmen.

Zusätzliche Möglichkeit zur Teilnahme an einem Interview

Am Ende der Studie besteht die Möglichkeit, sich für ein weiterführendes Interview zu melden, um tiefergehende Einblicke in Ihre Erfahrungen und Perspektiven zu gewinnen. Falls Sie dazu bereit sind, können Sie Ihre E-Mail-Adresse am Ende des Fragebogens hinterlassen. Mit Ihrer Teilnahme hoffen wir, Sie und Ihre Kollegen und Kolleginnen künftig noch besser im Umgang mit schutzbedürftigen Personen während Vernehmungen unterstützen zu können.

Diese E-Mail-Adresse wird getrennt von Ihren anderen Daten gespeichert und anonymisiert behandelt, sodass kein Rückschluss auf Ihre Person aus den restlichen Studienteilnehmerdaten gezogen werden kann. Auch hier gilt: Ihre Teilnahme am Interview ist vollständig freiwillig, und Sie können Ihre Einwilligung jederzeit zurückziehen.

Vertraulichkeit

Ihre Antworten werden vollständig anonym erfasst. Wir sammeln keine personenbezogenen Daten, die auf Ihre Identität zurückgeführt werden könnten. Die anonymisierten Daten könnten in anonymisierter Form für andere Forscher zugänglich gemacht werden. Die erhobenen Daten werden nach den Richtlinien der Universität für bis zu 10 Jahre aufbewahrt, bevor sie gelöscht werden.

Rechte der Teilnehmenden

Ihre Teilnahme ist freiwillig. Sie können sich jederzeit und ohne Angabe von Gründen entscheiden, die Studie abubrechen, ohne dass Ihnen daraus Nachteile entstehen. Sollten Sie Ihre Teilnahme nachträglich zurückziehen wollen, können Sie dies innerhalb von 10 Tagen nach Ihrer Teilnahme per E-Mail an die Studienleitung tun.

Wenn Sie Fragen zu Ihren Rechten als Forschungsteilnehmer und Forschungsteilnehmerin haben, weitere Informationen benötigen oder Bedenken bezüglich der Studie haben und diese mit einer anderen Person als der Forscherin besprechen möchten, können Sie sich an das Sekretariat des Ethikkomitees wenden:

ethicscommittee-bms@utwente.nl.

Für weitere Informationen zur Studie wenden Sie sich bitte an die Studienleitung:

Judith Steinhauer, j.steinhauer@student.utwente.nl

Einwilligungs- und Autorisierungsbestimmungen für die Studie „Vernehmungen und psychologische Schutzbedürftigkeit“

Mit meiner Angabe erkläre ich:

- Ich verstehe, dass die von mir gegebenen Informationen in zukünftigen Berichten, Artikeln, Publikationen oder Präsentationen von den Forschern verwendet werden können, jedoch in anonymisierter Form.
- Ich verstehe, dass anonymisierte Daten gemäß den Universitätsrichtlinien bis zu 10 Jahre nach Ende der Studie aufbewahrt werden.
- Ich bin damit einverstanden, an der Studie teilzunehmen. Ich weiß, dass meine Teilnahme freiwillig ist und ich mein Einverständnis jederzeit und ohne Angabe von Gründen innerhalb von 10 Tagen nach meiner Teilnahme zurückziehen kann.

Ich erkläre hiermit mein Einverständnis zur Teilnahme an der Studie:

- ☐ Ja, ich bin einverstanden.
- ☐ Nein, ich bin nicht einverstanden.

Fragebogen

Schriftliche Fragen:

Demographisch:

Wir möchten Sie bitten, einige Fragen zu Ihren demografischen Informationen und persönlichen Erfahrungen zu beantworten.

(1) Was ist Ihre Geschlechtsidentität?

- ☐ Weiblich
- ☐ Männlich
- ☐ nicht-binär/ genderqueer
- ☐ kein Geschlecht
- ☐ Sonstige _____
- ☐ Möchte ich nicht angeben

(2) Wie alt sind Sie?

- ☐ Unter 25 Jahren
- ☐ 25 – 34 Jahre alt
- ☐ 35 – 44 Jahre alt
- ☐ 45 – 54 Jahre alt
- ☐ 55 Jahre oder älter

(3) Welche Funktion oder Position üben Sie derzeit bei der Polizei aus?

- _____

(4) In welchem Jahr haben Sie Ihre Ausbildung bei der Polizei begonnen? (bitte geben Sie das Jahr in dem Format JJJJ an)

- _____

(5) Wie lange arbeiten Sie bereits in Ihrer aktuellen Funktion bei der Polizei?

- ☐ Weniger als 1 Jahr
- ☐ 1 – 5 Jahre
- ☐ 6 – 10 Jahre
- ☐ 11 – 15 Jahre
- ☐ Mehr als 16 Jahre

(6) Seit wie vielen Jahren führen Sie bereits Vernehmungen durch?

- ☐ Weniger als 1 Jahr
- ☐ 1 – 5 Jahre
- ☐ 6 – 10 Jahre
- ☐ 11 – 15 Jahre
- ☐ Mehr als 16 Jahre

(7) Wie viele Vernehmungen führen Sie im Durchschnitt in einer Woche durch?
(bitte eine Zahl zwischen 1 und 99 angeben)

○ _____

Psychologische Schutzbedürftigkeit:

Psychologische Schutzbedürftigkeit sind Risikofaktoren, die das Verhalten und somit die Aussagen einer zu vernehmenden Person beeinflussen können und potenziell zu ungenauen Aussagen oder sogar falschen Geständnisse führen können.

Es gibt vier Haupttypen psychologischer Schutzbedürftigkeit:

- **Psychische Erkrankungen:** z. B. Depressionen, Angststörungen, Psychosen
- **Geistige Behinderungen:** Einschränkungen der kognitiven Fähigkeiten
- **Neurodiversität:** ADHS, Autismus-Spektrum-Störung, Dyslexie
- **Abnorme psychische Zustände:** z. B. extremer Stress, Entzug, Schlafmangel

(8) Kennen Sie jemanden in Ihrem Bekanntenkreis oder in der Familie, der/die eine psychologische Schutzbedürftigkeit (z. B. ADHS, Autismus-Spektrum-Störung, Dyslexie) hat?

- Ja
- Nein
- Weiß ich nicht / keine Angabe

(9) Haben Sie außerhalb Ihrer Tätigkeit bei der Polizei mit Personen gearbeitet, die eine psychologische Schutzbedürftigkeit aufweisen? Falls Ja, bitte erläutern Sie.

- Ja, _____
- Nein
- Weiß ich nicht / keine Angabe

Eigene Fähigkeiten:

Im Folgenden möchten wir Ihnen einige Fragen stellen über Ihre eigenen Fähigkeiten. Bitte bewerten Sie Ihr Erlebnis auf einer Skala:

Ich stimme überhaupt nicht zu (1); Ich stimme nicht zu (2); Neutral (3); Ich stimme zu (4); Ich stimme voll und ganz zu (5); Keine Angabe (6).

Bitte wählen Sie die Antwort, die Ihr Gefühl am besten beschreibt.

Ich bin zuversichtlich ...	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
... meine Kenntnisse zutreffend einzuschätzen, um eine Vernehmung einer schutzbedürftigen Person vorzubereiten.						
... eine Vernehmung einer schutzbedürftigen Person in angemessener Weise vorzubereiten.						
... meine Fähigkeit zutreffend einzuschätzen, um Anzeichen zu erkennen, die auf eine schutzbedürftige Person hinweisen.						
... schutzbedürftige Personen zuverlässig zu identifizieren.						

... meine Kenntnisse zutreffend einzuschätzen, um Anzeichen von Schutzbedürftigkeit in angemessene Folgemaßnahmen umzusetzen.						
... schutzbedürftige Personen zu erkennen und die erforderlichen Folgemaßnahmen einzuleiten.						
... meine eigenen Fähigkeiten zur Vernehmung einer schutzbedürftigen Person zutreffend einzuschätzen.						
... meine Vorgehensweise an die spezifischen Bedürfnisse und Umstände der schutzbedürftigen Person während der Vernehmung anzupassen.						
... die Interessen der unmittelbar beteiligten Personen (z. B. Verdächtige, Opfer, Hinterbliebene) während der Vernehmung angemessen zu berücksichtigen.						
... meine Wortwahl an das Alter, die Schutzbedürftigkeit und den Entwicklungsstand der Person während der Vernehmung angemessen anzupassen.						
... meine Fragen an das Alter, die Schutzbedürftigkeit und den Entwicklungsstand der Person während der Vernehmung angemessen anzupassen.						
... das Tempo der Vernehmung an das Alter, die Schutzbedürftigkeit und den Entwicklungsstand der Person während der Vernehmung anzupassen.						
... mein Sozialverhalten an das Alter, die Schutzbedürftigkeit und den Entwicklungsstand der Person während der Vernehmung anzupassen.						
... eine schutzbedürftige Person in rechtlichen Angelegenheiten verantwortungsvoll zu vernehmen.						
... eine schutzbedürftige Person in ethisch vertretbarer Weise zu vernehmen.						
... Kollegen bei der Vernehmung von schutzbedürftigen Personen inhaltlich zu unterstützen, zu coachen und zu beraten.						

Hätten Sie Interesse daran, Ihre Fähigkeiten und Fachkompetenz im Umgang mit schutzbedürftigen Personen in Vernehmungen zu verbessern?

- ☐ Ja
- ☐ Ein wenig
- ☐ Neutral

- Eher nicht
- Nein
- Keine Angabe

Im Folgenden möchten wir Ihnen einige Fragen stellen über Ihre eigenen Fähigkeiten.
Geben Sie für jede Gruppe von Schutzbedürftigen an, inwieweit Sie sich in der Lage fühlen, diese zu vernehmen.

Bitte bewerten Sie dies auf einer Skala:

(Unqualifiziert (1); ein wenig unqualifiziert (2); Neutral (3); ein wenig qualifiziert (4);

Qualifiziert (5); Keine Angabe (6).

Bitte wählen Sie die Antwort, die Ihr Gefühl am besten beschreibt.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Person mit einer geistigen Behinderung						
Person mit einer psychischen Störung						
Person mit einer kognitiven Funktionsstörung (z. B. erworbene Hirnschädigung)						
Person mit einer Autismus-Spektrum-Störung						
Person mit AD(H)S						
Minderjährige Person						

Potenzielle Untersuchungsmethode / Potenzielles Training:

Im Folgenden möchten wir Ihnen einige Fragen stellen über Ihre Ausbildung, Potenzielle Untersuchungsmethoden und Potenzielles Training. Bitte bewerten Sie Ihr Erlebnis auf einer Skala:

Nein (1); Eher nicht (2); Neutral (3); Ein wenig (4); Ja (5); Keine Angabe (6).

Bitte wählen Sie die Antwort, die Ihr Gefühl am besten beschreibt.

Frage:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Wurde während Ihrer Ausbildung bei der Polizei das Thema "Psychologische Schutzbedürftigkeit" (z. B. ADHS, Autismus-Spektrum-Störung, Dyslexie) behandelt?						

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Falls Nein, hätten Sie sich das gewünscht? Falls Ja, bitte erläutern Sie. (maximal 100 Wörter) 						
Existiert bei Ihnen ein Einstufungsinstrument / Fragebogen zur Einschätzung um (psychologische) Schutzbedürftigkeit zu erkennen?						
Wie nützlich halten Sie solch ein Einstufungsinstrument / Fragebogen zur Einschätzung? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Skala: Gar nicht nützlich (1); Eher nicht nützlich (2); Neutral (3); Ein wenig nützlich (4); Sehr nützlich (5); Keine Angabe (6). 						
Wünschen Sie sich solch ein Einstufungsinstrument / Fragebogen zur Einschätzung? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bitte erläutern Sie. (Maximal 100 Wörter) 						
Gibt es ein Training, um Sie auf Personen vorzubereiten welche (psychologisch) Schutzbedürftig sind? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Falls Nein, wünschen Sie sich solch ein Training? Falls Ja, wie sieht solch ein Training aus? (Maximal 100 Wörter) 						
Gibt es Weiterbildungsmethoden, um Sie auf Personen vorzubereiten welche (psychologisch) Schutzbedürftig sind? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Falls Nein, wünschen Sie sich solch eine Weiterbildungsmethode? Falls Ja, wie sieht solch eine Weiterbildungsmethoden aus? (Maximal 100 Wörter) 						

Zum Abschluss möchten wir Ihnen herzlich für Ihre Teilnahme an unserer Studie danken. Unabhängig davon, ob Sie bereits umfangreiche Erfahrung mit dem Thema psychologische Schutzbedürftigkeit haben oder bisher keine direkten Berührungspunkte in diesem Bereich hatten, würden wir uns freuen, wenn Sie Interesse an einem weiterführenden persönlichen Interview hätten.

In diesem Interview möchten wir das Thema der psychologischen Schutzbedürftigkeit bei Vernehmungen sowie mögliche Trainings- und Untersuchungsmethoden im Detail besprechen. Sie hätten die Möglichkeit, Ihre Erfahrungen, Einschätzungen und Meinungen mit uns zu teilen. Auch wenn Sie bisher keine direkten Erfahrungen gesammelt haben, ist Ihre Perspektive für uns von großem Interesse.

Falls Sie interessiert sind, können Sie Ihre E-Mail-Adresse am Ende des Fragebogens hinterlassen. Diese wird anonym gespeichert und ausschließlich für die Kontaktaufnahme im Rahmen dieses Interviews genutzt. Wir werden Sie dann per E-Mail kontaktieren, um einen Termin zu vereinbaren. Sie haben die Wahl, ob das Interview online oder persönlich stattfinden soll. Zudem bleibt Ihre Teilnahme jederzeit freiwillig – auch nach einer Terminvereinbarung können Sie ohne Angabe von Gründen zurücktreten.

Wir freuen uns sehr auf die Möglichkeit, mit Ihnen in Kontakt zu treten und gemeinsam über dieses wichtige Thema zu sprechen. Ihre Teilnahme würde einen wertvollen Beitrag zu unserer Untersuchung leisten.

- _____

Gibt es noch weitere Informationen, die Sie mir mitteilen möchten?

- _____

Complete Questionnaire (English)

Translated with DeepL

Informed consent:

Aim of the study

Interrogations of people with psychological vulnerabilities, such as people with ADHD, autism-spectrum disorder or dyslexia, are particularly difficult. As these diagnoses become more common and awareness of the needs of these individuals grows, it is increasingly important to establish appropriate procedures to conduct efficient and successful interrogations

This study explores what measures and strategies are already being used and what support police officers consider useful in this context.

Explanation of psychological vulnerability

Psychological vulnerabilities are risk factors that can influence the behaviour and thus the statements of a person being questioned and can potentially lead to inaccurate statements or even false confessions.

There are four main types of psychological vulnerability:

- **Mental illness:** e.g. depression, anxiety disorders, psychosis
- **Mental disabilities:** Limitations in cognitive abilities
- **Neurodiversity:** ADHD, autism, dyslexia

- **Abnormal mental conditions:** e.g. extreme stress, withdrawal, lack of sleep

Procedure of the study

As a participant in this study, you will be asked for your perspective on interviewing people with psychological vulnerability. You will be asked various questions about your previous experiences and the measures you already use or find helpful. Your participation will take about 15 to 20 minutes.

Additional opportunity to take part in an interview

At the end of the study, you will have the opportunity to take part in a follow-up interview to gain more in-depth insights into your experiences and perspectives. If you are willing to do so, you can leave your e-mail address at the end of the questionnaire. With your participation, we hope to be able to support you and your colleagues even better in the future in dealing with vulnerable persons during interrogations.

This e-mail address will be stored separately from your other data and treated anonymously so that no conclusions can be drawn about you from the other study participant data. Again, your participation in the interview is completely voluntary and you can withdraw your consent at any time.

Confidentiality

Your answers are recorded completely anonymously. We do not collect any personal data that could be traced back to your identity. The anonymised data could be made available to other researchers in anonymised form. The data collected will be kept for up to 10 years in accordance with university guidelines before being deleted.

Rights of the participants

Your participation is voluntary. You can decide to withdraw from the study at any time without giving reasons and without incurring any disadvantages. If you wish to withdraw your participation at a later date, you can do so within 10 days of your participation by sending an e-mail to the study management.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, require further information or have concerns about the study that you would like to discuss with someone other than the researcher, you can contact the Ethics Committee secretariat:

ethicscommittee-bms@utwente.nl.

For further information about the study, please contact the principal investigator:

Consent and authorisation provisions for the study 'Interrogations and psychological vulnerability'

By giving my consent, I declare:

- I understand that the information I have given may be used in future reports, articles, publications or presentations by the researchers, but in anonymised form.
- I understand that anonymised data will be kept for up to 10 years after the end of the study in accordance with university policy.
- I agree to participate in the study. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw my consent at any time and without giving reasons within 10 days of my participation.

I hereby declare my consent to participate in the study:

- ☐ Yes, I agree.
- ☐ No, I do not consent.

Questionnaire

Written questions:

Demographisch:

Wir möchten Sie bitten, einige Fragen zu Ihren demografischen Informationen und persönlichen Erfahrungen zu beantworten.

What is your gender identity?

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ non-binary/ genderqueer
- ☐ No gender
- ☐ Other _____
- ☐ I do not wish to specify

How old are you?

- ☐ Under 25 years old
- ☐ 25 - 34 years old
- ☐ 35 - 44 years old
- ☐ 45 - 54 years old
- ☐ 55 years or older

What is your current function or position in the police force?

- _____

In which year did you start your training with the police? (please enter the year in the format YYYY)

- _____

How long have you been working in your current position with the police?

- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ 1 - 5 years
- ☐ 6 - 10 years
- ☐ 11 - 15 years
- ☐ More than 16 years

How many years have you been conducting interrogations?

- ☐ Less than 1 year
- ☐ 1 - 5 years
- ☐ 6 - 10 years
- ☐ 11 - 15 years
- ☐ More than 16 years

On average, how many interviews do you conduct in a week?

(please enter a number between 1 and 99)

☐ _____

Psychological vulnerability:

Psychological vulnerabilities are risk factors that can influence the behaviour and therefore the statements of a person being interrogated, potentially leading to inaccurate statements or even false confessions.

There are four main types of psychological vulnerability:

- **Mental illness:** e.g. depression, anxiety disorders, psychosis
- **Mental disabilities:** Limitations in cognitive abilities
- **Neurodiversity:** ADHD, autism, dyslexia
- **Abnormal mental conditions:** e.g. extreme stress, withdrawal, lack of sleep

Do you know anyone in your circle of friends or family who has a psychological vulnerability (e.g. ADHD, autism, dyslexia)?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ I don't know / no answer

Have you worked with people who have a psychological vulnerability outside of your work with the police? If yes, please explain.

☐ Yes, _____

☐ No

☐ I don't know / no answer

Your own skills:

In the following we would like to ask you some questions about your own skills. Please rate your experience on a scale:

I strongly agree (1); I agree (2); Neutral (3); I disagree (4); I strongly disagree (5); Don't know (6).

Please select the answer that best describes your feelings.

I am confident ...	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
... to assess my knowledge correctly in order to prepare an interview with a vulnerable person.						
... prepare an interview with a vulnerable person in an appropriate manner.						
... accurately assess my ability to recognise signs that indicate a vulnerable person.						
... reliably identify vulnerable persons.						
... correctly assess my knowledge in order to translate signs of vulnerability into appropriate follow-up actions.						
... recognise vulnerable persons and initiate the necessary follow-up measures.						
... correctly assess my own abilities to interview a vulnerable person.						
... adapt my approach to the specific needs and circumstances of the vulnerable person during the interview.						
... take appropriate account of the interests of the persons directly involved (e.g. suspects, victims, surviving relatives) during the interview.						
... to adapt my choice of words appropriately to the age, vulnerability and developmental stage of the person during the interrogation.						

... to adapt my questions appropriately to the age, vulnerability and developmental stage of the person during the interrogation.						
... adapt the pace of the interrogation to the age, vulnerability and developmental stage of the person during the interrogation.						
... adapt my social behaviour to the person's age, need for protection and level of development during the interrogation.						
... to assess my knowledge correctly in order to prepare an interview with a vulnerable person.						
... prepare an interview with a vulnerable person in an appropriate manner.						
... to support, coach and advise colleagues in the interrogation of vulnerable persons.						

Would you be interested in improving your skills and expertise in dealing with vulnerable persons during interrogations?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ A little
- ☐ Neutral
- ☐ Rather not
- ☐ No
- ☐ No answer

In the following, we would like to ask you some questions about your own abilities. For each group of vulnerable people, indicate the extent to which you feel able to listen to them.

Please rate this on a scale:

Skilled (1); Somewhat skilled (2); Neutral (3); Somewhat unskilled (4); Unskilled (5); Don't know (6).

Please choose the answer that best describes your feeling.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Person with a mental disability						
Person with a mental disorder						
Person with a cognitive dysfunction (e.g. acquired brain injury)						
Person with an autism spectrum disorder						

Person with AD(H)S						
A minor						

Potential examination method / Potential training:

Below we would like to ask you some questions about your education, Potential Research Methods and Potential Training. Please rate your experience on a scale:

Yes (1); Somewhat (2); Neutral (3); Rather not (4); No (5); Don't know (6).

Please choose the answer that best describes your feelings.

Question:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Was the topic of 'psychological vulnerability' (e.g. ADHD, autism spectrum disorder, dyslexia) covered during your police training? - If no, would you have liked this? If yes, please explain. (maximum 100 words)						
Do you have an assessment tool / questionnaire to recognise (psychological) vulnerability?						
How useful do you consider such an assessment tool / questionnaire to be? - Scale: Not at all useful (1); Rather not useful (2); Neutral (3); A little useful (4); Very useful (5); Don't know (6).						
Would you like to have such an assessment tool / questionnaire? - Please explain. (Maximum 100 words)						
Is there any training to prepare you for people who are (psychologically) vulnerable? - If no, would you like such training? If yes, what does such training look like? (Maximum 100 words)						
Are there any further training methods to prepare you for people who are (psychologically) vulnerable? - If no, would you like to have such a further training method? If yes, what do such further training methods look like? (Maximum 100 words)						

Finally, we would like to thank you for your participation in our study. Regardless of whether you already have extensive experience with the topic of psychological vulnerability or have

not yet had any direct contact with this area, we would be delighted if you would be interested in a further personal interview.

In this interview, we would like to discuss the topic of psychological vulnerability during interrogations as well as possible training and investigation methods in detail. You would have the opportunity to share your experiences, assessments and opinions with us. Even if you have no direct experience to date, your perspective is of great interest to us.

If you are interested, you can leave your e-mail address at the end of the questionnaire. This will be stored anonymously and will only be used to contact you for this interview. We will then contact you by e-mail to arrange an appointment. You can choose whether the interview takes place online or in person. In addition, your participation remains voluntary at all times - even after an appointment has been made, you can withdraw without giving reasons.

We are very much looking forward to the opportunity to get in touch with you and talk about this important topic together. Your participation would make a valuable contribution to our study.

- _____

Is there any other information you would like to share with me?

- _____

Appendix C

Interview guide (German)

Einleitung zum Experteninterview

Herzlich willkommen zu unserem Experteninterview zum Thema „Psychologische Schutzbedürftigkeit bei Vernehmungen“. Vielen Dank, dass Sie sich die Zeit nehmen, Ihre Erfahrungen und Einsichten mit uns zu teilen. Dieses Interview dient dazu, ein tieferes Verständnis für die Herausforderungen und Methoden im Umgang mit schutzbedürftigen Personen in Vernehmungssituationen zu gewinnen.

Wir möchten darauf hinweisen, dass das Interview nicht zu 100 % im Voraus geplant werden kann. Der Verlauf des Gesprächs kann sich im Redefluss entwickeln, und wir werden die Themen entsprechend Ihren Antworten anpassen. Dies ermöglicht uns, auf relevante Aspekte intensiver einzugehen und ein flexibleres Gespräch zu führen.

Zu Beginn werden wir einige demografische Fragen wiederholen, um ein allgemeines Bild zu schaffen. Dies erfolgt unabhängig von den Antworten im Fragebogen, um die Anonymität und Vertraulichkeit zu gewährleisten. Wir freuen uns auf einen offenen und konstruktiven Austausch.

Potenzielle Fragen für das Experteninterview:

(Nach der anonymen Auswertung des Fragebogens könnten die Fragen für das Experteninterview angepasst werden, um spezifische Themen, die sich herauskristallisieren, gezielt zu vertiefen.)

Allgemeines Gefühl der Sicherheit:

- Wie sicher fühlen Sie sich bei Befragungen?

Erfahrung mit Schutzbedürftigen:

- Wie oft sind Sie während Ihrer Erfahrung als Befrager auf schutzbedürftige Personen gestoßen?

Beobachtete Arten von Schutzbedürftigkeit:

- Welche Arten von Schutzbedürftigkeit beobachten Sie bei Befragungen?

Erkennung von Schutzbedürftigkeit:

- Können Sie mir mehr darüber erzählen, wie Sie während einer Befragung Schutzbedürftigkeit erkennen?

Verhalten bei Erkennung von Schutzbedürftigkeit:

- Wie verändert sich Ihr Verhalten im Rahmen der Befragung, wenn Sie Schutzbedürftigkeit erkennen?

Erkennung von Schwierigkeiten:

- Welche Schutzbedürftigkeit ist Ihrer Meinung nach schwieriger zu erkennen? Welche ist einfacher? Und warum?

Unterstützung durch Fragebögen:

- Glauben Sie, dass ein Fragebogen zur Feststellung von Schutzbedürftigkeit Ihnen eine Unterstützung sein könnte?

Vollständigkeit des Fragebogens:

- Glauben Sie, dass ein Fragebogen zur Feststellung von Schutzbedürftigkeit alle erkennbaren Schwachstellen bei jeder Befragung aufdecken kann? Können Sie erklären, warum oder warum nicht?

Inhalt eines effektiven Fragebogens:

- Was sollte Ihrer Meinung nach ein Fragebogen beinhalten, um ein breiteres Spektrum an Schutzbedürftigkeit zu erkennen?

Bevorzugte Methoden zur Aufdeckung:

- Sie haben erwähnt, dass Sie ... als Methoden zur Aufdeckung von Schutzbedürftigkeit verwenden. Können Sie diese genauer erläutern und warum Sie diese Methode bevorzugen?

Schulung zur Erkennung von Schutzbedürftigkeit:

- Haben Sie eine Schulung zur Erkennung von Schutzbedürftigkeit bei Vernehmungen absolviert?
 - Falls JA: Welche Aspekte dieser Schulung haben Ihnen besonders gut gefallen und welche Aspekte könnten Ihrer Meinung nach verbessert werden? Können Sie dies begründen?
 - Falls NEIN: Würden Sie sich solch eine Schulung wünschen? Und was genau würden Sie sich bei solch einer Schulung wünschen?

Abschluss des Experteninterviews

Gibt es weitere Themen, die Sie uns mitteilen möchten und die wir noch nicht besprochen haben?

Haben Sie noch weitere Fragen an mich?

Vielen Dank für Ihre wertvollen Beiträge und die Offenheit, mit der Sie Ihre Erfahrungen und Meinungen geteilt haben. Ihre Einsichten sind von großer Bedeutung für unser Verständnis der psychologischen Schutzbedürftigkeit in Vernehmungssituationen.

Falls Sie noch Anmerkungen oder Fragen haben, stehe ich Ihnen jederzeit zur Verfügung. Wir schätzen Ihre Zeit und Ihr Engagement in diesem wichtigen Thema und danken Ihnen nochmals herzlich für Ihre Teilnahme.

Interview guide (English)

Translated with DeepL

Introduction to the Expert Interview

Welcome to our expert interview on the topic of 'Psychological vulnerability during interrogations'. Thank you for taking the time to share your experiences and insights with us. The purpose of this interview is to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and methods of dealing with vulnerable people in interrogation situations.

We would like to point out that the interview cannot be planned 100% in advance. The course of the interview may develop as the conversation flows and we will adapt the topics according to your answers. This allows us to go into more detail on relevant aspects and have a more flexible conversation.

At the beginning, we will repeat some demographic questions to create a general picture. This will be done independently of the answers in the questionnaire to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. We look forward to an open and constructive dialogue.

Potential questions for the expert interview:

(After the anonymous evaluation of the questionnaire, the questions for the expert interview could be adapted to focus on specific topics that emerge).

General feeling of safety:

- How safe do you feel during interviews?

Experience with vulnerable people:

- How often have you encountered vulnerable people during your experience as an interviewer?

Types of vulnerability observed:

- What types of vulnerability do you observe during interviews?

Recognising vulnerability:

- Can you tell me more about how you recognise vulnerability during an interview?

Behaviour when a vulnerability is identified:

- How does your behaviour change during the interview when you identify vulnerability?

Recognising difficulties:

- Which vulnerability do you think is more difficult to recognise? Which is easier? And why?

Support through questionnaires:

- Do you think a questionnaire to identify vulnerability could be of support to you?

Completeness of the questionnaire:

- Do you think a vulnerability questionnaire can identify all recognisable vulnerabilities in each interview? Can you explain why or why not?

Content of an effective questionnaire:

- What do you think a questionnaire should include to detect a wider range of vulnerabilities?

Preferred methods of detection:

- You mentioned that you use ... as a method for detecting vulnerability. Can you explain these in more detail and why you favour this method?

Training to recognise vulnerability:

- Have you received training on recognising vulnerability during interviews?
 - If YES: Which aspects of this training, did you particularly like and which aspects, do you think could be improved? Can you give reasons for this?

- If NO: Would you wish for such a training? And what exactly would you like to see in such a training programme?

Conclusion of the expert interview

Are there any other topics you would like to tell us about that we have not yet discussed?

Do you have any other questions for me?

Thank you for your valuable contributions and the openness with which you have shared your experiences and opinions. Your insights are of great importance to our understanding of psychological vulnerability in interrogation situations.

If you have any comments or questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. We appreciate your time and commitment to this important topic and thank you again for your participation.

Appendix D

Study enquiry

Der Polizeipräsident in Berlin

Polizeiakademie
Studien- und Forschungsanfragen
PA St 114



Alle nachfolgenden Textfelder sind Pflichtangaben und für eine schnellstmögliche Bearbeitung zwingend erforderlich.

Kontaktdaten

☐ Herr Vorname: _____ Nachname: _____
☐ Frau _____ _____

☐ Polizeiangehörige(r) des Landes Berlin ☐ Polizeiangehörige(r) des Bundes oder eines anderen Bundeslandes

Erreichbarkeit

Anschrift: _____ Telefonnummer: _____
_____ _____
_____ E-Mail: _____
_____ _____

Art der Arbeit

☐ Bachelorarbeit ☐ Masterarbeit ☐ Doktorarbeit
☐ Forschungsarbeit ☐ Praxisstudie ☐ Hausarbeit / Referat
☐ Sonstige: _____

Voraussichtlicher Abgabetermin: _____

Die Institution und der Fachbereich

☐ Fachhochschule ☐ Universität ☐ Unternehmen
☐ Hochschule ☐ Akademie ☐ Sonstige
Fachbereich: _____

Die Institution ist...

☐ privat-rechtlich ☐ öffentlich-rechtlich

Name der Institution: _____ Name des Betreuers: _____
_____ _____
Anschrift der Institution: _____ Erreichbarkeit des Betreuers:
_____ (E-Mail oder Telefonnummer)
_____ _____

Die eigene Funktion in der Institution/Lehreinerichtung

☐ Student/in ☐ Professor/in ☐ Wissenschaftler/in
☐ Wiss. Mitarbeiter/in ☐ Doktorand/in ☐ Privatperson



Der Polizeipräsident in Berlin

Polizeiakademie
Studien- und Forschungsanfragen
PA St 114

☐ Sonstige: _____

Das Anliegen/die Art der Anfrage:

- ☐ Schriftliche Fragen (Fragenkatalog liegt bei).
- ☐ Ein Experteninterview (Fragenkatalog liegt bei).
- ☐ Eine Statistikanfrage.
- ☐ Materialübersendung.
- ☐ Eine anonyme Mitarbeiterumfrage (Fragenkatalog liegt bei).
- ☐ Etwas anderes: _____

KONKRETE Beschreibung des Anliegens

Thema der Arbeit:

Nähere Erläuterung des Anliegens etc.:

Soweit eine Unterstützung von der Polizei Berlin gewährt wird, verpflichte ich mich, dem Polizeipräsidenten in Berlin ein Belegexemplar meiner Arbeit unaufgefordert und kostenlos, vorzugsweise in elektronischer Form, zu überlassen.

Ort, Datum



eigenhändige Unterschrift (keine Signatur)

Appendix E

Declaration of confidentiality

Der Polizeipräsident in Berlin

Polizeiakademie
Studien- und Forschungsanfragen
PA St 114



Verpflichtung

Persönliche Angaben

<input type="checkbox"/> Herr	Vorname: _____	Nachname: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Frau	_____	_____
Adresse: _____	Geburtsdatum: _____	
_____	_____	
_____	Telefon: _____	

wurde heute im Hinblick auf die beabsichtigte Mitteilung einer amtlich geheim gehaltenen Angelegenheit (Verschlussache) darauf hingewiesen, dass deren unbefugte Weitergabe eine strafrechtliche Verfolgung nach sich ziehen kann.

Er/Sie wurde über die in Betracht kommenden Vorschriften zum Schutz von Verschlussachen unterrichtet.

Ihm/Ihr wurde u.a. mitgeteilt:

1. Niederschriften und Aufzeichnungen dürfen nur mit ausdrücklicher Genehmigung des Besprechungspartners/Verhandlungsleiters gefertigt und Unbefugten nicht zugänglich gemacht werden.
2. Er/Sie ist für die Aufbewahrung der übergebenen Verschlussache(n) sowie dafür verantwortlich, dass ihr Inhalt Unbefugten nicht zugänglich gemacht wird.
3. Vervielfältigungen jeder Art von Verschlussachen sowie die Herstellung von Auszügen sind untersagt.

Herr/Frau _____

ist hiermit zur Verschwiegenheit und zur Geheimhaltung von Verschlussachen förmlich verpflichtet. Ein Merkblatt wurde ausgehändigt.

Ort, Datum _____

Unterschrift des/der Verpflichteten: _____

Unterschrift des/der Verpflichtenden: _____

Der Polizeipräsident in Berlin

Polizeiakademie
Studien- und Forschungsanfragen
PA St 114

Merkblatt über die Behandlung von Studien- und Forschungsarbeiten mit einem Geheimhaltungsgrad VS-NfD (Verschlussache – NUR FÜR DEN DIENSTGEBRAUCH)

Angelegenheiten, deren Kenntnisnahme durch Unbefugte für die Interessen oder das Ansehen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland oder eines ihrer Länder nachteilig sein können, müssen mit dem Geheimhaltungsgrad „VS – Nur für den Dienstgebrauch“ eingestuft und besonders behandelt werden.

Für Studien- und Forschungsanfragen ist die Nutzung geheim zu haltender Daten der Polizei Berlin maximal bis zum Geheimhaltungsgrad NUR FÜR DEN DIENSTGEBRAUCH möglich (VS-NfD). Diese Inhalte/Daten dürfen nur Personen zugänglich gemacht werden, die im Zusammenhang mit einer Unterstützung der Polizei Berlin zum Studien- oder Forschungszweck unabdingbar Kenntnis erhalten müssen.

Über die geheim zu haltenden Inhalte/Daten ist Verschwiegenheit zu wahren. Sie sind daher unter Verschluss zu halten. Ob die Inhalte/Daten als VS-NfD einzustufen sind, entscheidet die Dienststelle, die diese den Anfragenden zur Verfügung stellt.

Die Verschlussachen sind von den Anfragenden wie folgt zu behandeln:

- a) Aufbewahrung in verschlossenen Räumen oder Behältern,
- b) Kennzeichnung der Arbeit auf dem Einband bzw. Titelblatt am oberen Rand mit „VS - Nur für den Dienstgebrauch“,
- c) Weitergabe ausschließlich an VS-NfD verpflichtete Personen.

Auch hier gilt der Grundsatz „Kenntnis nur, wenn nötig“. Die Weitergabe darf nur im verschlossenen Umschlag erfolgen. Vor einer Inanspruchnahme Dritter (z.B. Erst- und Zweitkorrektoren von Studienarbeiten) sind diese zur Beachtung vorstehender Bestimmungen zu verpflichten.

Mit sämtlichen Arbeitsmaterialien, die als VS-NfD eingestufte Daten enthalten, ist ebenso zu verfahren.

Stand: 11.06.2020

Appendix F

Data protection agreement

Der Polizeipräsident in Berlin
Polizeiakademie
PA St 114

Datenschutzerklärung

.....

Diese Datenschutzerklärung soll den o.a. Antragsteller/die o.a. Antragstellerin in Bezug auf die Studien- und Forschungsanfragen über die Art, den Umfang und den Zweck der Erhebung und Verwendung der personenbezogenen Daten informieren.

Diesbezüglich wird auf die zentrale Datenschutzerklärung unserer Website (<https://www.berlin.de/polizei/datenschutzerklaerung.700498.php>) verwiesen.

Zweck der Datenverarbeitung:

Die abgefragten personenbezogenen Daten (Name, Adresse, Telefon, E-Mail, Institution und Betreuer) werden gem. Art. 6 Abs. 1 lit. A DS-GVO elektronisch erfasst und abgespeichert, um während der Bearbeitung und Beantwortung Ihrer Anfrage auf diese zurückgegriffen werden kann. Eine Verwendung Ihrer Daten außerhalb der Polizei Berlin ist nicht vorgesehen.

Löschung der gespeicherten Daten:

Die Aufbewahrungsfrist der Antragsunterlagen und somit die Speicherung Ihrer personenbezogenen Daten beträgt auf Grundlage der Geschäftsanweisung der Polizei GA ZSE I Nr. 5/2013 über die Aufbewahrung und Aussonderung bzw. Vernichtung von Akten und Archivgut fünf Jahre.

Wenn Sie eine Berichtigung, Sperrung, Löschung oder Auskunft über die zu Ihrer Person gespeicherten personenbezogenen Daten wünschen oder Fragen bezüglich der Erhebung, Verarbeitung oder Verwendung Ihrer personenbezogenen Daten haben oder erteilte Einwilligungen widerrufen möchten, wenden Sie sich bitte an folgende E-Mail-Adresse: studienundforschungsanfragen@polizei.berlin.de

Ich bin mit der Speicherung, Verarbeitung und Verwendung meiner personengebundenen Daten einverstanden.

Meine Einwilligung beruht auf meiner freien Entscheidung und kann jederzeit widerrufen werden. Durch den Widerruf der Einwilligung wird die Rechtmäßigkeit der aufgrund der Einwilligung bis zum Widerruf erfolgten Verarbeitung nicht berührt.

.....
Datum

.....
Unterschrift

Appendix G

R Code

Descriptive Statistics

```
# Set the working directory
setwd("~/Desktop/2 Master's Thesis/Data")
# Install required libraries if not already installed
install.packages("readxl")
install.packages("dplyr")
# Load required libraries
library(readxl)
library(dplyr)
# Load data
VALUES <- read_excel("VALUES.xlsx")
# Function to calculate N, mean, and standard deviation for Likert-scale questions, excluding
# NAs
process_likert_filtered <- function(data) {
  # Initialise an empty data frame for the results
  results <- data.frame(Question = character(),
                        N = integer(),
                        Mean = numeric(),
                        Standard_Deviation = numeric(),
                        stringsAsFactors = FALSE)

  # Iterate over each column
  for (col in colnames(data)) {
    # Try to convert the column to numeric, ignoring errors
    numeric_responses <- suppressWarnings(as.numeric(data[[col]]))

    # Remove NA values
    numeric_responses <- na.omit(numeric_responses)

    # Check if the column contains Likert-scale values (1 to 5)
    if (all(numeric_responses %in% 1:5)) {
      # Reverse the Likert scale (1 = Strongly Agree to 5 = Strongly Disagree)
      numeric_responses <- 6 - numeric_responses

      # Calculate statistics
```

```

n <- length(numeric_responses)
mean_value <- mean(numeric_responses)
std_dev <- sd(numeric_responses)

# Append the results to the results data frame
results <- rbind(results, data.frame(Question = col,
                                     N = n,
                                     Mean = mean_value,
                                     Standard_Deviation = std_dev))
}
}

return(results)
}
# Use the updated function on the VALUES dataset
results_filtered <- process_likert_filtered(VALUES)
# Print the updated results
print(results_filtered)
# Filter out rows with N = 0
results_filtered <- results_filtered %>% filter(N > 0)
# Print the refined results
print(results_filtered)

```

Exploratory Analysis

```

# Set the working directory
setwd("~/Desktop/2 Master's Thesis/Data")

# Load necessary libraries
library(dplyr)
library(readxl)

# Load data
VALUES <- read_excel("VALUES.xlsx")

# Step 1: Data Cleaning
# Delete completely empty columns (columns where all values are NA)
VALUES <- VALUES %>%

```

```

select(where(~ !all(is.na(.))))

colnames(VALUE$) <- VALUE$[1, ] # Set the first row as column names
VALUE$ <- VALUE$[-1, ]         # Remove the first row (header)

# Reset row numbers
rownames(VALUE$) <- NULL

# Define shorter names for each column
short_names <- c(
  "Gender", "Age", "Year_Training", "Years_Position",
  "Years_Interrogation", "Weekly_Interviews", "Familiarity_Vulnerability",
  "Family_Vulnerability", "Work_Vulnerability", "Confidence_Prepare",
  "Confidence_Prepare_Well", "Confidence_Identify_Signs", "Confidence_Identify_Reliable",
  "Confidence_Adapt", "Confidence_Act",
  "Confidence_Skills", "Confidence_Adjust", "Confidence_Consider_Interests",
  "Confidence_Adapt_Language", "Confidence_Adapt_Questions",
  "Confidence_Adapt_Tempo", "Confidence_Adapt_Social",
  "Confidence_Legal", "Confidence_Ethical", "Confidence_Coach",
  "Interest_Training", "Competence_Intellectual", "Competence_Mental",
  "Competence_Cognitive", "Competence_Autism", "Competence_ADHD",
  "Competence_Minor", "Training_Psych_Vuln", "Instrument_Exists",
  "Instrument_Useful", "Instrument_Desirable", "Training_Exists",
  "Methods_Exists", "Participant_ID"
)

# Rename columns
colnames(VALUE$) <- short_names

# Step 2: Convert Categorical IVs to Factors
categorical_IVs <- c("Age", "Year_Training", "Years_Position", "Years_Interrogation")

VALUE$[categorical_IVs] <- lapply(VALUE$[categorical_IVs], as.factor)

# Step 3: Ensure Numeric for DVs
# Define dependent variable groups
confidence_skills <- c(

```

```

"Confidence_Prepare", "Confidence_Prepare_Well", "Confidence_Identify_Signs",
"Confidence_Identify_Reliable", "Confidence_Adapt", "Confidence_Act",
"Confidence_Skills", "Confidence_Adjust",
"Confidence_Consider_Interests", "Confidence_Adapt_Language",
"Confidence_Adapt_Questions", "Confidence_Adapt_Tempo",
"Confidence_Adapt_Social", "Confidence_Legal", "Confidence_Ethical",
"Confidence_Coach"
)

competence_groups <- c(
  "Competence_Intellectual", "Competence_Mental", "Competence_Cognitive",
  "Competence_Autism", "Competence_ADHD", "Competence_Minor"
)

interest_training <- c("Interest_Training", "Instrument_Desirable")

psychological_training <- c("Training_Psych_Vuln", "Instrument_Exists", "Training_Exists",
"Methods_Exists")

# Ensure numeric for DVs
VALUES[confidence_skills] <- lapply(VALUES[confidence_skills], as.numeric)
VALUES[competence_groups] <- lapply(VALUES[competence_groups], as.numeric)
VALUES[interest_training] <- lapply(VALUES[interest_training], as.numeric)
VALUES[psychological_training] <- lapply(VALUES[psychological_training], as.numeric)

# Reverse Likert Scale for Confidence Variables
VALUES[confidence_skills] <- lapply(VALUES[confidence_skills], function(x) {
  return(6 - x) # Reverse the Likert scale
})

# Step 4: Define Dependent Variable Means
VALUES <- VALUES %>%
  mutate(
    Confidence_Mean = rowMeans(select(., all_of(confidence_skills)), na.rm = TRUE),
    Competence_Mean = rowMeans(select(., all_of(competence_groups)), na.rm = TRUE),
    Interest_Mean = rowMeans(select(., all_of(interest_training)), na.rm = TRUE),
    Psychological_Mean = rowMeans(select(., all_of(psychological_training)), na.rm = TRUE)
  )

```

```

)

# View all rows for calculated means
print(VALUE[c("Confidence_Mean", "Competence_Mean", "Interest_Mean",
"Psychological_Mean")], n = Inf)

# Step 5: Perform ANOVA for Categorical IVs
anova_results <- list()

for (iv in categorical_IVs) {
  for (dv in c("Confidence_Mean", "Competence_Mean", "Interest_Mean",
"Psychological_Mean")) {
    result <- tryCatch({
      aov_model <- aov(as.numeric(VALUE[[dv]]) ~ as.factor(VALUE[[iv]]), data = VALUE)
      summary(aov_model)
    }, error = function(e) {
      NULL
    })

    if (!is.null(result)) {
      anova_results[[paste(iv, dv, sep = "_")]] <- list(
        Independent_Variable = iv,
        Dependent_Variable = dv,
        F_Statistic = result[[1]]$`F value`[1],
        P_Value = result[[1]]$`Pr(>F)`[1]
      )
    }
  }
}

anova_summary_df <- do.call(rbind, lapply(anova_results, as.data.frame))
write.csv(anova_summary_df, "anova_results.csv", row.names = FALSE)

# Step 6: Perform Correlation Tests for Truly Continuous IVs
continuous_IVs <- c("Weekly_Interviews") # Only true continuous variable

correlation_results <- list()

```

```

for (iv in continuous_IVs) {
  for (dv in c("Confidence_Mean", "Competence_Mean", "Interest_Mean",
"Psychological_Mean")) {
    result <- tryCatch({
      cor.test(as.numeric(VALUES[[iv]]), as.numeric(VALUES[[dv]]), use = "complete.obs")
    }, error = function(e) {
      NULL
    })

    if (!is.null(result)) {
      correlation_results[[paste(iv, dv, sep = "_")] <- list(
        Independent_Variable = iv,
        Dependent_Variable = dv,
        Correlation_Coefficient = result$estimate,
        P_Value = result$p.value
      )
    }
  }
}

correlation_summary_df <- do.call(rbind, lapply(correlation_results, as.data.frame))
write.csv(correlation_summary_df, "correlation_results.csv", row.names = FALSE)

# Step 7: Perform T-Tests for Binary Categorical IVs
binary_IVs <- c("Gender", "Familiarity_Vulnerability", "Family_Vulnerability",
"Work_Vulnerability")

t_test_results <- list()

for (iv in binary_IVs) {
  for (dv in c("Confidence_Mean", "Competence_Mean", "Interest_Mean",
"Psychological_Mean")) {
    result <- tryCatch({
      t.test(as.numeric(VALUES[[dv]]) ~ as.factor(VALUES[[iv]]), na.action = na.exclude,
var.equal = FALSE)
    }, error = function(e) {

```

```

    NULL
  })

  if (!is.null(result)) {
    t_test_results[[paste(iv, dv, sep = "_")] <- list(
      Independent_Variable = iv,
      Dependent_Variable = dv,
      T_Statistic = result$statistic,
      P_Value = result$p.value,
      Mean_Group_1 = result$estimate[1],
      Mean_Group_2 = result$estimate[2]
    )
  }
}

t_test_summary_df <- do.call(rbind, lapply(t_test_results, as.data.frame))
write.csv(t_test_summary_df, "t_test_results.csv", row.names = FALSE)

# Step 8: View Results
print(anova_summary_df)
print(correlation_summary_df)
print(t_test_summary_df)

# Convert Years_Position to a factor
VALUES$Years_Position <- as.factor(VALUES$Years_Position)

# Conduct ANOVA for Confidence in Interrogation Skills based on Years in Position
anova_model <- aov(Confidence_Mean ~ Years_Position, data = VALUES)

# Perform Tukey's HSD post-hoc test
tukey_results <- TukeyHSD(anova_model)

# Print the post-hoc test results
print(tukey_results)

```

UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE

Drienerlolaan 5
7522 NB Enschede

P.O.Box 217
7500 AE Enschede

P +31 (0)53 489 9111

info@utwente.nl

www.utwente.nl